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EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE'S
PERCEPTION OF COUNSELLING:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY.

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
(COUNSELLING STUDIES)

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MODULAR PROGRAMME IN
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by Anne Le'Surf

ABSTRACT

This study explores young people's perceptions which are of relevance to the creation, operation and promotion of a Youth Counselling Service in Shropshire. It uses qualitative methods to interview youth workers/counsellors and young people (both individually and in groups). The constant comparative method is used to analyse the data. The outcomes reveal the existence of significant perceptual blocks in this hard to reach group which would inhibit them from asking for help in counselling and suggest some ways of overcoming these through the design and promotion of the youth counselling service. A clear picture emerges from the data of the nature of the counselling service they would find acceptable. The relevance of the outcomes to the wider issues of access to counselling and the nature of counselling services in the future is discussed.

DECLARATION

**This work is original and has not been submitted previously
in support of any qualification course.**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

STATEMENT

Over 250,000 clients used Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services in 1993 (Feaviour 1994). The growth in availability of such services reflects a growing awareness in society that young people are increasingly facing complex decisions at an earlier age and against a background of the disintegration of traditional support structures such as the family, the church and the community. They need therefore to turn elsewhere for help (Goodey 1973; Clarkson 1991; Feaviour 1994). In 1961 the first service opened in Brent, by 1992 176 agencies were registered with Youth Access (the new name for the National Association of Young People's Counselling and Advisory Services).

In spite of this rapid growth nationally large areas of the country have no such service. Where such services do exist many young people do not use them. Thus many young people remain geographically and emotionally distanced from the help they need.

The Mental Health Foundation estimates that two million children and young people suffer from mental distress with young adolescents particularly vulnerable. Although most conditions are relatively mild and temporary some 250,000 16 year olds per annum require specialist help (Young People Now Sept. 1995). Since 1980 there has been a 71% increase in the numbers of young men aged between 15 to

24 taking their own lives. In 1992 582 males and 132 females in this age group committed suicide (Department of Health Figs. 1992). Samaritans research suggests 47% of all young people had serious thoughts of suicide and 11% had actually tried suicide. (Young People Now Sept. 1995).

Shropshire Youth Service is currently attempting to establish a Youth Counselling Advice and Information Service for Young People in Shropshire. Hopefully this will redress some of the difficulties of geographical inaccessibility. The question arises however of the best model for delivery of such a service in order to maximise access for young people.

In order to be effective, providers attempting to meet the needs of young people need to consult with them in designing services. As pointed out by Feavious (1994) there has been little attempt to explore and listen to the thoughts and opinions of young people about the nature of provision offered to them. Such disregard for clients' views is not unusual in the area of social welfare provision, (Mayer and Timms 1970; Porteous and Fisher 1980). Currently however there is a trend towards acknowledging the rights of clients to influence the nature of the services they receive. Some attempts have been made in the area of Information, Advice and Counselling (Murgatroyd 1977; Porteous and Fisher 1980) and in related fields, for example Woodcock et al (1992) surveyed young people attitudes towards sexual health programmes in school. There is however relatively little research available in the field of youth counselling. In his review of the literature on the subject Feavious (1994) concluded that even in the research that had been done there have been no real attempts to elicit the views of young people, thus an important research variable has been omitted.

In his study Feaviour explored the attitudes of clients and providers of youth counselling services in relation to four dimensions: confidentiality, informality of service provision, specificity in offering services and independence of the agency. His study provides useful information in relation to the characteristics likely to increase the attractiveness of a youth counselling agency to potential clients. He also notes a close correspondence between client and provider attitudes in these areas.

In reviewing literature from a number of youth counselling agencies it appears that there is some consensus on the nature of the services to be offered (For example the 1995 Annual Report of Centre 33 and Off the Record). Significant characteristics seem to be those as described by Feaviour. Another common feature is the combination of counselling with advice and information service often without clear definition of the difference between these services or the appropriate level of training and support required to deliver each appropriately. Thus the term “counselling” is used to describe a wide range of helping in relationships without definition. I suspect such confusion in service providers reflects and engenders confusion for potential clients.

An interesting aspect of Feaviour’s report (1994) is the large proportion of quotations from young people in the upper age range of the target population. Only one quarter are for those aged 14 - 18 years (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Number of Responses Quoted for Each Age in Feaviour’s Study.

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	25+
Number of	0	5	3	9	10	11	4	7	6	6	3	10	23

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	25+
Number of	0	5	3	9	10	11	4	7	6	6	3	10	23

My own experience suggests that it is easier for young people to ask for help as they get older (16+) yet we know many in the lower age range (13 - 16) have serious difficulties.

For many young people the years between 13 and 16 represent the height of their adolescent “Identity Crises” (Erikson 1968), a stage of development marked by “storm and stress” (Coleman and Hendry 1980 p.12). Even for those who do not experience such internal turmoil this “second individuation process” (Bloss 1967) of adolescence is a time of considerable challenge and ambiguity as the individual negotiates separation from the family of origin and begins to adopt a more autonomous role. It is not surprising that young people at this stage of development would be reluctant to ask for help particularly in the light of their own uncertainty and the lack of consistency in the response of adults around them who may treat them as children sometimes and as adults at others. I would expect the study to reveal some clues about these issues and the associated perceptions of young people about asking for help in counselling.

In the light of my desire to elicit the views of young people on the nature of the service to be established to serve them in Shropshire, the experience in other similar agencies and prior research in the area I have chosen to focus this research project on the perceptions of young people about counselling. My own experience suggests that even when counselling is available young people are often reluctant to engage in the process. In explaining such reluctance there seem to be two possible foci to explore: the nature of the service being provided (including those aspects explored by Feavivour) and young people's wider perceptions of the whole process of counselling which could be regarded as inclusive of the first focus or distinct from it.

I want to focus on the perceptions of young people about counselling in the widest sense. It seems crucial in designing a service which is accessible that in addition to practical considerations about the nature of the service I also attempt to explore deeper and perhaps subconscious perceptions in relation to counselling since it is likely that it is on the basis of such perceptions that they will make their final decision about whether to take the step in asking for the help they need. An understanding of these perceptions is essential if education, publicity and outreach work is to focus accurately on changing those perceptions which block young people and enhance those perceptions which encourage their use of counselling services.

I have conducted a literature search around my focus of enquiry but decided not to include a review of the literature at this point because, as described below, I adopted a phenomenological approach and an emerging design. In order to remain as far as possible "presuppositionless" (Kvale 1983) I read the literature after collecting and analysing the data. In order to mirror the process I followed in the study in recording

it here I have deferred the review of the literature and its relevance here to the section in which I discuss the outcomes of the study. It is worth noting at this point, however, that my literature search did indicate a paucity of relevant material on the subject of client perceptions of counselling.

In the next section I will outline the research process which I adopted and the methods of data collection and analysis used. The data will be presented in an organised but raw form with a minimum of comment in Appendix I. In the outcomes section I will present the main themes emerging from the data and then discuss these in the context of information from other studies. In the evaluation section I will explore the positive and negative aspects of the study and in the conclusion I will summarise the main findings, future directions for research and recommendations which emerge from the study.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN - RATIONALE

The focus of my research was on deepening my understanding of how young people perceive counselling. I was particularly keen to understand why some young people who could be helped by counselling do not ask for it and may decline it when it is offered. Because it seems particularly difficult for those in the 13 - 18 years range to ask for and accept counselling I focused on this group in more depth.

It appeared likely that the relevant factors in exploring the difficulty in accessing young people to counselling lay in their perceptions about what counselling means, what happens in counselling, what sort of people need counselling, past experiences in asking for help, their world view particularly in relation to their situation vis-à-vis adults and expectations re the nature of relationships with adults. In addition to such conscious perceptions often lie deeper blocks which may be out of awareness such as feelings of responsibility for their own difficulties, guilt, fear of change and a sense of powerlessness to change what is. These deeper blocks are clearly not age-specific.

The starting point for my research was a tacit knowledge that young people themselves hold the key to understanding how best to reach this group. While I had some clues about this phenomenon from my own experience as a youth worker and counsellor I

needed to deepen my understanding of it. The most appropriate research design was one which would help me to deepen my knowledge and insight into the perceptual world of young people at this stage of development at the present time in Shropshire. To some extent therefore the research is context specific although some of the emerging themes may have a wider applicability.

In view of the above a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach was more appropriate. Quantitative research is based on a philosophical position that “knowledge is unitary, and therefore attainable through a standardised set of specific procedures” (McLeod 1994 p.76). In contrast qualitative research arises from a philosophical stance that “human knowledge is contextualised and local” (McLeod 1994 p.77). McLeod (1994 p.78) goes on to define qualitative research as, “a process of systematic inquiry into the meanings which people employ to make sense of their experience and to guide their actions”. An approach which adopts the more phenomenological position of qualitative research and focuses on “the meanings events have for the persons being studied” (Patton 1991) seemed more in tune with the purpose of the present study than a quantitative approach. More specifically I chose the qualitative approach here because

- I considered that the study needed to be one with a broad and open ended focus which would allow meaning to be discovered as I explored and described what young people said about my focus of enquiry.
- The preparation of a quantitative instrument such as a questionnaire immediately involves a process of selection of relevant issues to be explored. I wanted to explore without pre-conceived views of relevance restricting my enquiry.

- I believe it is common, particularly among young people to answer in the way they feel required to rather than as they really feel. I want to explore deeper perceptions which might feel less “acceptable”.
- I believe that provision based on quantitative research is often aimed at provision for the “majority” or “average” rather than the “minority”. In a sense counselling is a service aimed at the minority viz. at individuals in circumstances of difficulty and crises. It feels important to explore blocks which might operate to affect them at critical times rather than “average views”.
- A quantitative study *tends to focus on respondent’s views which are in awareness*. My guess is that some of the important blocks in seeking counselling lie out of awareness.

As indicated above (p.6) in order to keep an ‘open mind’ in approaching the participants and the data I did not read the literature before collecting and analysing my data. I started from an assumption that the client group themselves hold the answers thus it seemed more appropriate to let them guide the direction of my study rather than research any ideas generated elsewhere. There is support for such an approach in the literature. McLeod (1994 p.80) stated that

“in many research situations the qualitative researcher may wish to make as few prior assumptions as possible regarding the topics to be covered.”

In similar vein Kvale (1983) identifies a key aspect of qualitative research interviews as being that they are “Presuppositionless. Rather than coming with ready made categories and schemes of interpretation, there is an openness to new and unexpected phenomena”.

Since my own experience and qualitative research elsewhere (Feavious 1994) suggests that providers of services for young people in this area are in touch with their client group it seemed likely they would also have some insights to possible directions and themes. This seemed particularly likely where the providers are counsellors who through their counselling relationships may have had intimate glimpses into the perceptual world of their clients in a way few 'outsiders' have. Also clients who have received counselling may be able to articulate the anxieties and ideas they had before entering counselling and suggest from their own experiences what helped and hindered them in taking the step to become involved in the counselling process. On the basis of these views I decided that an emergent design was more appropriate allowing the path of the research to unfold in the light of insights derived from these 'local' experts.

The focus of inquiry required a deep insight into the world of the participants. As in counselling the safer the participant feels in the research encounter the more likely they are to become aware of and share their true perceptions. My own experience and training suggested that this safety is best established within a relationship in which the core conditions are present viz., acceptance, empathy and congruence. This approach seems to be supported in the literature on qualitative research (see for example Bogdan & Taylor 1975 p. 13-14 quoted in Maykut and Morehouse 1994 Chapter 7) and fits well with the posture of indwelling described by Grene (1969 p.84) as appropriate for qualitative researchers, suggesting an attempt to be "at one with the person's point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 p.25, p.25).

To achieve my objective of understanding the perceptions of young people I needed a method flexible enough to capture the complexity and fluidity of the participants' experience and to explore, clarify, analyse and summarise their experience. I could not achieve this with a standard questionnaire or fixed instrument. I therefore decided to use in-depth interviews.

In order to redress issues of power it was necessary for me to be able to quickly establish an equal and respectful relationship with the participants and thus maximise the possibility of deep and honest sharing. I believe that my training and experience as a youth worker facilitated this. My counselling training equipped me to establish these conditions in conducting the interviews and hopefully thus making them more effective. This is particularly important since a feature of my research was the use of the "human as instrument" based on the belief that "human situations and human beings are too complex to be captured by a static one dimensional instrument" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 p.27).

The settings for the interviews were informal and natural for the participants and comfortable and safe, i.e. a youth work setting. I intended to create a real sense of the young people being collaborators in the project "who together with us mutually shape and determine what we come to understand about their own situation." (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 p.70).

CHAPTER 3

DATA COLLECTION

I adopted an emergent design for my study allowing its precise nature to evolve in form as clarity grew about what needed to be explored and the best way of doing this. In line with this emergent design I began my study by exploring the issue through individual unstructured interviews with 3 “knowledgeable people in the field”.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE IN THE FIELD.

The aims of these interviews were:

- To balance the subjectivity of the study by discussing the issue with others who are experienced in this area thus enabling me to check my perceptions against theirs and revise mine and integrate theirs as appropriate.
- To obtain their views on appropriate strategies for conducting the interviews with young people.

- To explore their perceptions of young people's perceptions of counselling. Since they are involved with young people in various roles and particularly through their counselling work they are likely to have deep insights into the perceptual worlds of young people. They are also likely to be able to articulate these clearly. It could be argued that such perceptions are "second hand" and therefore invalid but Feaviour's study suggests a deep understanding of young people's needs by those who work directly in providing services for them (Feaviour 1992).

In view of the above I decided to interview three youth workers who have considerable experience and are involved in counselling young people. A significant goal for this study was identifying the main strands in our collective wisdom and bringing some of our tacit knowledge into clearer focus and full awareness.

On the basis of these three interviews I decided that the most appropriate method for exploring young people's perceptions of counselling (given the time and other restrictions of the present study) was to conduct a combination of individual and group interviews.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The aim of these interviews was:

- To explore young people's perceptions of counselling in depth. This was considered to be more possible in a 1 : 1 situation.

I decided to interview one young person with no experience of counselling and two young people who were past-clients. The advantage of exploring the issue with past-clients was felt to be that the depth of relationship which had already been created would facilitate deep sharing without the need to conform or perform. It was also felt that the work done in counselling might enable these young people to recognise and own what might have previously been subconscious perceptions. This view seemed to be supported by one of these young people.

“I mean I wouldn’t have, a couple of months ago, I wouldn’t have been able to say all of that. Just talking to you, I’d have probably sat here and gone all red and not said anything and you’d have had to ask me questions and I would have just answered them.” (Y.W. 17)

I decided to interview one young person who had not been involved in counselling to provide a balance. In fact I discovered in the course of the interview she had previously seen a psychiatrist.

The interviews with individual young people were unstructured.

The disadvantage of 1 : 1 interviews was thought to be the danger of the respondent trying to please the interviewer with their responses. As one young person later said about her first interview with her counsellor!

“I think I found very much that I wanted to say what was expected of me instead of saying what I felt or didn’t feel at the time.” (Y.W. 17)

GROUP INTERVIEWS

The aims of the group interviews were:

- To obtain the views of a wide range of young people.
- To use the group situation to allow young people the safety created within the power of the group to explore/express feelings. It was felt this might be particularly important if perceptions were counter to the perceived stance of the interviewer.
- To use the group to generate ideas, understanding and clarity which are often the product of interactions between individuals.
- To create a context for the individual interviews and a picture of the “generalised view“ of young people towards counselling.

In selecting the groups for the interviews it was considered to be important that the group was functioning effectively and to a large extent at the ‘performing stage’ in order to maximise its usefulness and accuracy.

The main disadvantage of using groups was considered to be the depth of sharing that was possible with a “new interviewer” coming in.

THE INTERVIEWS

“The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understanding in their own terms.” (Patton 1991 p.97)

The interview is thus not just “a conversation with a purpose”; it must also move beyond surface talk to a rich discussion of thought and feeling (Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p.80). My counsellor training ensured I had the necessary skills to facilitate this process in the interviews.

The first six interviews were unstructured except that the focus was identified. This allowed the participants perspective maximum space and time to emerge and limited the importance of my assumptions. The group interviews which followed were semi-structured. I have discussed with the “knowledgeable experts” the possibility of using a projective technique but the consensus was that a semi-structured approach, in the sense some areas for exploration had been identified, was preferable. I identified the themes from analysing the initial interviews, they were thus grounded in the data. The resulting format for the group interviews was thus “an open ended discussion around a loose structure.” (Youth Worker)

I was aware of the danger of diverting the contribution of later participants to fit pre-existing impressions and I tried to avoid doing this.

In order to allow adequate time for deep engagement in the interview process all were scheduled for 1 hour and taped to avoid the need for note-taking (which I felt would detract from engagement) while allowing for accurate recall and later analysis.

ACCESS TO THE SAMPLE

I am a full-time Youth Worker employed by Shropshire County Council Youth Service. In this role I have a number of colleagues trained as both Youth Workers and Counsellors. Three of these agreed to be interviewed as “Knowledgeable Experts in the Field”.

Through the Youth Service I also have access to a large number of young people across the area of North Shropshire including the market towns and more rurally isolated communities. I also have access to schools, colleges, training institutions and informal youth provision and the young people who use these facilities. My colleagues work with a number of ongoing groups and I asked them to suggest groups willing to participate. We selected three and asked if they were willing to co-operate and obtained agreement from them.

I work as a Youth Worker/Counsellor and therefore have access to a number of past-clients. I approached two to ask them to participate. I selected them on the bases that I felt that contact would not be difficult for them since our counselling contract had been successfully completed some months earlier. They were both keen to participate. The other individual came forward as a result of a general invitation to a group of young people to volunteer to take part.

PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE USED

Knowledgeable Experts

The Knowledgeable Experts interviewed were two full-time and one part-time youth workers employed by Shropshire County Council Youth Service. Their contributions are identified in the text as (Youth Worker). They all have in excess of five years Youth Work experience and hold a Certificate or Diploma in Counselling.

Individuals

Three young women aged 23 years, 17 years and 15 years were interviewed. (YW.23, YW.17, YW.15). Two had been in counselling, one for three years, one for six months. Further details cannot be given since this would jeopardise anonymity. For the same reason they are identified in the text only by gender and age.

Groups

The three groups who took part in this study were:

- A young women's group from Centre North West (CNW). This was an established group which is based in Oswestry. The age range is 16 - 19 years.
- A mixed rural youth group from St Martins (SM) in North Shropshire. The age range is 15 - 18 years. This is an established social group.

- A mixed Year 10 Personal and Social Education Group from Sir John Talbot's School in Whitchurch (CNE). This group had met as a group six times previously but the members were well known to each other.

The letters in brackets indicate the codes used in the text.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The limited amount of time available and scope of the study restricted the number of interviews I could conduct. I would have liked to work with a larger sample.

However, the sample used did include young people with the following characteristics:

- male/female
- 13 - 18 years old
- rural/urban
- at school/working/training/unemployed
- alienated/integrated
- extrovert/introvert
- having received counselling/hadn't received counselling
- severe emotional difficulties/well adjusted

Missing variables which I would have liked to have included (as far as I know):

homosexual

disabled

black

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that the ideal is to go on collecting data until saturation point is reached i.e. no new data is being generated. I do not feel that I reached this point but there were certainly diminishing returns in terms of the volume of new information being generated in later interviews analysed. This would suggest the study did bring up the major issues.

There were also limitations to the method of data collection in relation to the interviewees. The youth workers interviews were known to me and employed by the same agency thus there are likely to be common attitudes, approaches and perspectives and transference's to the interview from other situations. The use of ex-clients also has disadvantages, particularly associated with the transference of feelings and loyalties arising in the counselling relationship which might, for example, cause them to distort responses to please me. In the group interviews the group dynamics will have had an impact, for example, individuals may have expressed views they felt 'expected' to hold by their peers.

In spite of the limitations in the methods of data collection I consider that the provisions for trustworthiness adopted while conducting the study (see p.62) offer grounds for confidence in the validity of the outcomes.

ETHICAL ISSUES

- The issue of confidentiality was central in establishing participant safety in exploring and sharing deeply. The purpose of the study and the process of analysis and reporting the data was explained to participants and the issue of confidentiality discussed and clarified at the beginning of all interviews. In analysis and reporting the data confidentiality has been protected by maintaining anonymity.
- My training as a counsellor I believe enabled me to conduct the interviews sensitively and with awareness of the possibility of triggering sensitive material which might need an opportunity for follow on work. This opportunity was offered to all participants.
- Where individually sensitive issues arose in group situation I was aware of the need to 'protect' individuals from harmful or inappropriate disclosures.
- When issues arose in the course of the interview the well-being of the client was accorded priority over the function of data collection. In one instance in an individual interview we explored some of the client's personal material. I judged it appropriate in the situation but excluded all of this material from the transcription and analysis.

- It was intended that the participants would benefit rather than be damaged by taking part. This took priority in all situations even if it damaged the original purpose of data collection. I felt it important that all young people interviewed had a positive experience in the research since this was likely to be their first experience of meeting a “counsellor” and thus I felt it important that this encounter would encourage them to seek counselling if needed in the future.
- Appropriate supervision/debriefing was available and used.
- There was a dilemma about whether it was appropriate to make contact with past clients for the purpose of research. I only did this when I was confident it was appropriate. Ex-clients were ‘invited’ rather than ‘expected’ to participate.
- Access to all groups was negotiated through their facilitator.
- While the qualitative approach values the involvement of participants in evaluating the accuracy of the information culled in research and its interpretation participants may view such revisiting as bothersome and intrusive. At the end of the interview the participants were offered a brief summary of the main points I had registered in the interview and asked to comment on their satisfaction with its accuracy. They were also asked if they want to review the outcomes of the study and their wishes in this matter will be honoured.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

METHOD

There were three main stages in data collection. The first involved interviews with the three knowledgeable experts in the field. The major part of these interviews dealt with issues around the focus of the study. This section of the interviews was not analysed at this stage. The section which involved the discussion relating to the best method of consulting with young people about the focus of enquiry was analysed. On the basis of these views I decided on the next stages of the data collection processes.

The second stage involved in depth interviews with three individuals, two of whom had received counselling i.e. past-clients. One was a young woman who had not been involved in counselling. The rationale for this sample has been described above. When these interviews were completed the process of data analysis proper began. All of the interviews had been taped and were transcribed.

The method of data analysis I used was based on the Constant Comparative Method as designed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). This method involves the development of understanding of the phenomenon being studied by describing it with a minimum of interpretation. From this description comes the development of propositions, statements of facts inductively derived from a rigorous

and systematic analysis of the data. The analysis aims to stay close to the feelings, thoughts and actions of the participants in the research in relation to the focus of enquiry. The rationale is that what is important to analyse will emerge from the data by inductive reasoning.

In practical terms this involved photocopying, coding and unitising the data. Thereafter there was a simultaneous comparison of all the units of meaning obtained and each unit was grouped with similar units of meaning or formed the basis for the creation of a new category. I started this process by creating a Discovery Sheet listing words, concepts and themes arising from a first reading of the data. I then used each prominent idea so derived as a heading on a sheet of newsprint, these became provisional categories for the initial sorting of the data. All the units from each transcript were used apart from the initial part of the interviews which principally related to contracting and exploring the focus. In one case also the client explored some personal material which was not relevant to the focus. In line with the approach described under the section Ethical Considerations this material was excluded from analysis.

I began the process of writing rules of inclusion (Maykut & Morehouse 1994) propositional statements to describe the meaning of the provisional categories in general terms.

The next stage of the data collection was the group interviews. On the basis of the provisional categories and initial propositional statements I constructed a loose structure from the group interviews. This consisted not of a series of questions which I felt would be prescriptive and directive but rather a list of main themes to be explored in the interviews. I wanted to explore some of the main themes that had emerged in the individual interviews and to seek support or dis-confirmation of the emerging propositions. Where the group interview responses offered support for the emerging propositions this seemed to lend credence to their validity. Where there was dis-confirmation this offered an area worth exploring for explanation.

Using photocopied transcripts of the group interviews I coded and unitised the data as above and grouped the data on new sheets of newsprint but using the same provisional category titles. The next stage of analysis was to compare these sheets with the corresponding sheets from the individual interviews and identify similarities, contrasts confirmation, dis-confirmation or any other notable features.

The final stage in analysis was to combine both sets of data within the categories described by rules of inclusion/propositional statements which were revised where necessary to provide accurate reflections of the content. Where individual units of data became inappropriate to the new category they were moved to an appropriate category or formed a new category.

WRITING UP THE RESULTS

Writing up the results of the data analysis can be regarded as a part of the analytic process inasmuch as it involves the synthesis of insight and understandings derived from the data. The principle act of interpretation consisted of the creation of salient propositions to describe the meaning of each category the validity of which is supported by the data in the form of verbatim extracts. On the basis of these categories I then organised the data into a meaningful sequence. I added some brief comments where relevant. Since space is limited I edited the material but I excluded only those details which were duplicated.

I arranged the data into four main categories:

- Young People's Perceptions of Counselling.
- Young People's Perceptions of Themselves, Their Difficulties and Ways of Coping.
- Young People's Perceptions of Difficulties/Blocks in Asking for Help with Problems.
- Young Peoples Perceptions of What Would Help Them to Get Help in Counselling.

The outcomes are presented in Appendix 1 in these categories. After organising the data in these categories it became clear that the first two categories could be subsumed under the third category. Thus two main categories emerged relating to those factors which block and those which might facilitate access to counselling for young people. The discussion of the outcomes in the next chapter adopts this final categorisation.

Such changes are in line with the qualitative approach and emergent design of the study which suggests that meaning emerges from the data as it is explored rather than being imposed on it in advance. The process is thus to “discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis.”(Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p21).

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe three possible levels of interpretation of analysed data. I regard this study as fitting the second of their categories, principally description rather than the construction of models or theories. Thus it could also be described as “naturalistic” (Lincoln and Guba 1985) or Phenomenological (Pilkington 1989). Its aim is to provide a graphic picture of young people’s perceptions of counselling and consequently my original intention in presenting the outcomes of the study was to allow the data to speak for itself. In an attempt to “talk less and allow the research participants to talk more” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p160), I organised the data within the emerging categories indicated above and attempted to generate “an interesting and informative narrative” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p159) based largely on a “pure” presentation of participants thoughts and feelings, as expressed in verbatim extracts from the interviews, with minimal additional comment or interpretation from the author.

The advantage to this format lay in the rich and detailed picture which emerged and permitted an accurate representation of reality. The disadvantage of this format was that such a presentation of the data made it hard to hold its meaning. In order to resolve the tension between the need to reflect the complexity which mirrors reality and the need to create an integrating framework which makes it possible to identify and grasp emerging themes and transferable concepts I adopted a compromise solution. I have presented the data from the study fully in Appendix I. In this section

I will describe the main themes which emerge for me from the data. As indicated above the original four categories were reduced to two main categories each of which was subdivided. I will use this framework here. I will explore the themes emerging under two main category headings viz:

Factors which block young people's access to counselling.

Factors which could facilitate young people's access to counselling.

Within each of these main categories there are sub-categories.

FACTORS WHICH BLOCK YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO COUNSELLING.

Internal Blocks.

These are perceptual blocks within the individual which relate to **how they perceive themselves and their difficulties and the coping strategies they adopt.** For many young people their difficulties are experienced as an integral part of themselves, they are confluent with them. As one young woman expressed it, "That's how I have learned to live with it, its always been that way" (Y.W. 17). This sense of their difficulty being a part of their identity often generates feelings of powerlessness to change things.

During adolescence there may be a growing awareness of their difficulties and associated feelings may come to the surface. Various coping strategies may be adopted to deal with these feelings including emotional isolation, antisocial behaviour,

hyperactivity, eating disorders and depression. What appear as presenting problems may well be perceived by the individual as solutions. They are “creating a problem they can cope with” (Youth Worker). One young woman expressed her situation as follows, “It was easier than dealing with all the other stuff and I didn’t know what it was.... it was all too big to try to comprehend.” (Y.W. 17). In consequence there may be considerable ambivalence about dealing with “problems”. The help offered to young people may reinforce the sense that the individual is rather than has a problem. For example, for one young woman “The conclusion of seeing a psychiatrist was that what was wrong with me was that I had a very low opinion of myself, that was what I was told and then I just didn’t see them anymore.” (Y.W. 15).

Young people are often reluctant to ask for help because of a sense that “It’s safer to keep it inside.... if you start talking about it it gets scary, it gets real.... it’s sort of not happening really, you can keep it under control.” (Youth Worker).

As adolescence progresses such denial may be replaced by a growing sense of their responsibility for and the possibility of dealing with difficulties. “As you grow up you start to realise about responsibility.... I realised it was me that had to do something, that nobody could magic it away.” (Y.W. 23).

To reach out for help young people need to reach a stage where their internal blocks are breachable. This involves developing a perception that their difficulties are real and amenable to help, “I mean there’s the whole thing that you’ve got to accept, OK I’ve got a problem and I am going to have counselling.... it’s kind of accepting that it’s you that’s having it in the first place.” (Y.W. 15).

Blocks Related to Perceptions about Counselling Per Se.

Young Peoples **perceptions about counselling were often inaccurate or incomplete** (see appendix p62). For many “There’s no knowledge of counselling or how it can help or that any process can help, that you can actually be available to change.” (Youth Worker).

There were generally **favourable perceptions of counsellors** (p.34-85). They expected that they would be able to deal with difficulties and would offer acceptance and empathy. There was however **a lack of understanding about the counselling process**, “It was almost kind of you go there, they do something weird and strange and it just kind of sorts you out like that.” (Y.W. 17).

There was considerable **confusion about the nature of the counselling relationship** and a common expectation of direction which invoked ambivalent feelings. On the one hand direction was seen as good “because basically it meant I didn’t have to think about it myself” (Y.W. 17), but there was also resentment at the idea of “an official who would tell you what to do.” (Y.W. 17).

Young people were able to identify some of the **issues which could be dealt with in counselling** such as family relationships, death, divorce, drugs, alcoholism, rape, abuse (see appendix p64). There was, however, a clear perception that a problem needed to be **big and clearly labelled** (p.88) to be “suitable” for counselling.

The stereotypical **image of people who needed counselling was very negative** (see p.89). Although in group discussions positive comments were made (p.90) the same young people expressed strong views that they would not want anyone to know if they had counselling (p.92).

The data shows that many young people **lack knowledge of sources of help** (p.104) and how to ask for it (p.104). In reality help may not be available (p.104). The sources of information about counselling were at best incomplete and at worst inaccurate.

Blocks Related to the Transference of Expectations Derived in Other Relationships onto the Counselling Relationship.

Reaching out for help is difficult for many young people. Often their reluctance is rooted in **past experiences of relationships with adults** on the basis of which they predict likely responses to sharing problems with them. Their experience is often that “Adults just see things totally differently.... they are not willing to listen and take on a kids point of view.” (Y.W. 23).

Their expectation is that they will be ignored, patronised, misunderstood, disbelieved, dismissed, directed or punished (p.109-115).

A major block to seeking help is a **lack of trust in their right to confidentiality** even when this is promised (p.106). This seems to result from “trust having been destroyed by giving them false messages.” (Youth Worker).

Without confidentiality young people are reluctant to speak out about difficulties. This seems to be “more about keeping control than keeping it secret.” (Youth Worker). **The fear of losing power and control** over their difficulties is a major block and relates directly to their experience of past relationships with adults. They expect to be told what to do and not permitted to disagree, that their point of view will be dismissed and devalued (p.107-108). Young people are often left feeling powerless and “it’s hard to be assertive when you’ve got no power.” (Youth Worker). This sense of powerlessness is often exacerbated by a lack of information about consequences and once you have committed yourself you will be unable to withdraw.

Allied **fears of the counselling process itself** arise from transferential expectations. A big fear is of having to sit down and talk to a powerful adult and of being in a situation where you don’t understand what’s happening but are frightened to ask or where you are pushed to do what they say is best against your will. Their experience is that adults are often insensitive to them, to their feelings, to their wishes and their embarrassment (p.111). Often fears of talking to adults included that they would be seen as mad or bad or would be burdening others who haven’t the time or the ability to take on their difficulties.

Relationships within the **family** and experience of parental response are particularly important in moulding expectations (see below). For many **teachers** are their main contact with adults outside of their family. Many young people expressed negative views about sharing with them (p.111). A common complaint was the insistence of teachers that parents be told of any difficulties they shared with them, a consequence of which was that they often feel “betrayed” (CNE). The lack of confidentiality with

teachers seemed to go beyond telling parents. As one young man expressed it “If you tell the teacher in school you might as well put it in the fucking paper I’ll tell you.”

(S.M.). There were also complaints that teachers were not very respectful, not keen to help and not reliable (p.112). Some did, however, discriminate and made it clear, “It depends which teacher it is,” (S.M.) and reported some positive experiences.

In the eyes of young people other adults were also viewed as unhelpful in relation to their difficulties. For example, one young woman commenting on her experience of a **psychiatrist** concluded. “I haven’t got a very high opinion of psychiatrists. Basically it was shit.” (Y.W.15). In relation to **doctors** the general view is that they have no time to listen and would basically offer a prescription or advice. (p.115).

Not all adults were seen as unapproachable and unresponsive and some positive experiences with **youth workers** and **counsellors** were reported (p.114-115). The qualities they valued in these relationships were time, listening, care, trustworthiness and genuineness. In general, however, young people’s responses suggested strongly that their past experiences of adults make it hard for them to share difficulties with them and this strongly undermines their confidence in looking for help in counselling.

Blocks Related to Prevalent Attitudes and Values in Society in Relation to How to Deal with Difficulties.

Young people’s perceptions in relation to having problems and seeking help are moulded by **the attitudes and values** of those around them. Many thus believe that, “You’re weak or pathetic if you need help.” (Y.W. 15) and “It’s no good talking

about it you've just got to get on with it." (Youth Worker). Otherwise you are seen as a hypochondriac, a bore, an outcast (p.126). In consequence, "You put up and shut up." (CNE). Seeking help is counter to socially accepted attitudes. There is a deep seated belief that talking about difficulties doesn't help. In particular we don't regard it as acceptable to share intimate feelings (p.127). Seeking such help is shameful, it is viewed negatively as a sign you are not coping (p.127). There is still a stigma attached to counselling and a hint of mental illness (p.127).

The data suggests **stronger societal disapproval for men** expressing their feelings and seeking help (p.128). This reflects early socialisation (p.129) and a continued requirement that boys repress and hide their feelings (p.129). In consequence "Men sort of block out their fears." (S.M.). If they do share with male friends the response is often deflective laughter (p.128). Male friendship patterns often reflect society's prohibition of closeness and sharing for boys (p.129). There is an implication that emotional closeness implies homosexuality (p.129). Emotional sharing by a boy with a girl is more acceptable (p.130). These prevalent attitudes in society make it difficult for anyone to seek counselling but this is even harder for boys and men.

Attitudes and values in the family of origin are predictably the most powerful of societal attitudes influencing young people's attitudes towards seeking help. They can generate a negative response to sharing difficulties or can facilitate later help seeking (p.117-118). Even in those families where emotional sharing and help-seeking is acceptable there may be difficulties around fears of adding extra burdens or taboo topics.

A young person's ability to ask for counselling may be blocked by **societal stereotypes** in relation to appropriate sources of help. **Stereotypical views of the family** suggest that difficulties should be contained within the family (p.116) creating a sense of disloyalty if outside help is sought or family difficulties are discussed elsewhere. This stereotype is often inappropriate because difficulties often relate to relationships within the family, to issues which affect the whole family (eg death) or to taboo areas such as sex.

A similar block exists in relation to **friends**. Often young people initially seek help from friends. This is socially acceptable but while such sharing can be helpful and supportive (p.121) it is often inadequate. Friends are often limited in the depth and duration of support they can offer (p.122) and their responses where inadequate can help reinforce the individual's sense of futility in trying to get help and result in further emotional withdrawal (p.123). Thus often young people feel constrained to subscribe to a stereotype of close friendship and deep emotional sharing but the reality of their experience is very different. Their inability to elicit help and understanding can drive them inwards making subsequent help seeking more difficult. It is important to record that friends can respond very positively when difficulties are shared and can encourage individuals to seek help in counselling and support them through the process (p.124).

Another and related societal attitude is that **we don't seek help from "unknown people"** or share our experiences with them "I think it's just going and talking to a stranger that probably puts them off most because they don't know them". (CNW).

The data suggests, however, that it is not just the ‘strangeness’ of the counsellor that is discouraging. The preference for knowing the person you talk to seems to relate to anxieties about relationships with adults transferred from other situations as described above. The desire to know the person seems to reflect a requirement for an opportunity for “testing their trust, more than anything else. Whether you could trust the person to tell them things.” (CNW) and thus a chance to predict their likely response to shared material (p.131). This checking out process is important before making a commitment to a relationship from which they fear they will not be free to withdraw and in which they expect to lose power and control (p.132). Paradoxically a number of young people identified advantages in talking to a stranger (p.134).

FACTORS WHICH COULD FACILITATE YOUNG PEOPLE’S ACCESS TO COUNSELLING

The nature of the relationship they are being offered in counselling.

The study indicated that young people would be more willing to enter counselling if they were clear that they were being offered a relationship with particular characteristics. Interestingly their prime requirements mirrored the “core conditions” considered by many to be essential requirements for any successful counselling relationship viz they required **acceptance** (p.137) **empathy** (p.137) and **congruence** in the sense of the counsellor being real in the relationship (p.136). In such a relationship they can find “someone safe to talk to” (Y.W. 15) because it’s “with somebody that you trust.” (CNW).

In addition to these conditions they require a sense of **equality** (p.137). They want to feel **comfortable** (p.137) and **respected** (p.136) and to be **heard** (p.138). A number indicated that they would like the relationship to be **non-directive** and being able to keep some **control** over the pace and depth of the work seems important (p.138).

Confidentiality is seen as an **essential** element in the relationship and it must be respected if the service is to have credibility.

There was considerable clarity about the desirable qualities of a counsellor. They want “someone who doesn’t look all sort of authoritarian and official, someone who’s kind of dressed casually.” (Y.W. 15). They want the counsellor to have **knowledge** and **experience** (p.139).

Interestingly their expectation is that they will be given advice on how to deal with their difficulties even if they don’t want this (see above p.139). The right to exercise **choice** is an important aspect of the relationship they want and in particular they require the choice to withdraw if they wish to (p.143). This can be important in facilitating the work. “I think it’s different when you go there by your own choice. It’s you who’s actually decided to go there so you must be prepared to talk about it (Y.W. 15).

The characteristics young people want in a counselling service.

Young people painted a clear picture of the way a counselling service should be organised in order to be attractive to them. The venue needs to be **discrete** (p.140) and **accessible** (p.141). Accessibility is particularly significant since it facilitates autonomy (p.141). The service needs to be **flexible** (p.141) and **responsive**. **Informality** is an important factor (p.142) and seems to relate to enabling young people to keep power and choice. In particular they stress the right to withdraw. Informality also facilitates checking out of their own problem as worthy of attention (p.143) and any other uncertainties, particularly about the likely nature of the response. An **integrated** service whereby counselling is offered alongside other forms of help and advice is preferred. In particular this seems to allow greater anonymity by potentially disguising the reason for your visit if seen using the service (p.147). **Continuity** was also seen as an important characteristic by some respondents since they did not want to be passed around (p.144). A crucial feature is that it is **free** (p.145). Some young people expressed a preference for group or telephone counselling (p.144) but mostly one to one counselling was preferred.

Education, outreach work and publicity.

The participants suggested that young people need much more information about counselling. In particular they need to be told **what it is, how to ask for it, where to go and what's involved in it** (p.146). An opportunity to meet and talk to a counsellor is considered useful (p.146). Publicity is needed to raise awareness and

spell out more clearly what is involved and what is possible (p.146). Suggested ways of doing this included posters in schools, doctor's surgeries and colleges, videos and cards with phone numbers. Publicity needs to convey certain information which should include a **clear invitation** (p.148), some information about the process of counselling (p.148) and clarity about the **nature of the relationship** (p.147), **permission to check out** the service without obligation to engage (p.150) and clarity about the right to keep **power and control**. The possibility of returning later can be offered (p.151). A clear message needs to be given that **having a problem doesn't make you a bad person or mentally ill** (p.151). Publicity also needs to be clear that **men need help too** and that is okay. (p.151).

It seems particularly important that outreach information and publicity works towards promoting a **positive attitude in the peer group** towards counselling since the attitude of peers towards the process is of great significance and a positive attitude can be very facilitative (p.121). The relevance of experiential approaches in such work was indicated (p.146).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF THE OUTCOMES

The presentation of the outcomes of the study above gives a detailed picture of the factors which from the perspective of young people can block their access to a youth counselling service or facilitate such access. In this section I will discuss these outcomes in the context of views/information available in the literature in order to seek support for the outcomes and explore any wider and deeper significance they may have.

The first group of blocks identified are “internal blocks,” which prevent the individual from seeking help and relate to their perceptions of themselves, their difficulties and the coping strategies they adapt to ‘deal’ with these. Such internal blocks may exist at all ages but are likely to be particularly intense during adolescence. During this developmental stage the individual undergoes a “second individuation” (Bloss 1967) phase during which the individual continues and ideally completes the process of separation of self and establishes their individual identity. In their childhood prior to this most children experience dependence and a lack of autonomous mobility, their world view is largely limited to their home, school and immediate environment apart from windows on their world allowed by the media. In a sense the way the world is the way their world is. The complex process of separation is often marked by a period of ‘storm and stress’ and identity confusion. Limits to control and friction are explored, challenged and yet needed. The adolescent loves, hates, many communicate freely and then rapidly withdraw. This is often an “age of secrecy from adults,

particularly parents, a part of a technique of emotional separation which allows for increasing independence.” (Miller 1975). It is not surprising that many adolescents identify their difficulties as part of themselves rather than problems for which they can seek help. Such confluence often creates a sense of powerlessness to change and inhibits help seeking.

As individuals move towards the end of adolescence they often obtain a wider perspective and greater autonomy. Miller (1975) states that “between the ages of 12 and 18 fundamental changes take place in the adolescent’s responsibilities which involve a shift from considerable dependence on external authority to relatively autonomous behaviour.” In consequence they are more able to define their difficulties and in the right circumstances to ask for help. This would help to explain the progressive increase with age of number of young people who refer themselves for counselling (see for example fig. 1) and the changes in the nature of the problems for which they present (Hooper 1978).

The second set of blocks identified in the outcomes relate to the ignorance of young people about counselling per se. There is little understanding of the process of counselling or the nature of the counselling relationship. Such ignorance is not limited to young people. Patten and Walker’s (1990) study showed a similar lack of understanding in adults. There is often an expectation and a desire for advice and direction from the counsellor. In this study there is evidence of considerable ambivalence with young people simultaneously wanting someone else to take responsibility for difficulties and give direction and to keep control over decision making (See p.13). Murgatroyd (1970) reports a similar expectation of advice and

direction and explains this as a transferred exception from other roles which adults occupy. There is evidence in the present study that the desire for direction and control decreases with age (see p.70). It seems the expectation of direction may be facilitative if it is seen as helpful but as a block if seen as unwanted interference and an imposition of power and control (see p.86).

The outcomes indicate that there is a block which relates to their perceptions of 'appropriate' problems for counselling. It appears that young people expect such a problem to have a clear focus or label and are reluctant to bring difficulties which are more diffuse. This relates to an anxiety that their problem may be judged trivial. Feaviour (1994) supports this finding that "young people do not seek support due to a lack of confidence, low self esteem and a belief that their issue or problem is not serious enough"

Blocks to asking for counselling are also created by stereotypical views of the sort of people who need help from counselling. A common view is that people who need counselling have a mental health issue (see p.90) and this is very discouraging. Tyler (1978) supports this view.

The outcomes suggest a lack of understanding of the nature of the counselling relationship. This relates to the third set of blocks to accessing counselling identified in the study, the transference of expectations from other relationships onto the counselling relationship. The expectation from relationships with parents and teachers are particularly powerful since these are the sum of their experiences of relationships with adults for many adolescents.

Sadly for many young people they have no experience of a relationship with an adult in which it is possible to be equal, respected and share power. Thus to conceive of, or believe in, promises of a trusting equal relationship is very difficult. This provides a major block to accessing such a relationship in counselling. While some young people, particularly in the groups indicated a likelihood of positive transferences, for many young people the prognosis for the counselling relationship based on past relationships with adults is poor. In particular there is a lack of confidence in their ability to share their perceptual world (p.106) or understand their difficulties. Their experience is of being ignored (p.105) dismissed (p.105) diminished (p.105) and their confidences betrayed (p.106). There is a lack of trust in their right to confidentiality (p.106). There is an expectation of a negative response (p.105) which may well be punitive (p.105). They expect control to be taken from them (p.108) and for their views and opinions to be dismissed and devalued (p.108). Other writers have indicated the likelihood of the transference of expectations from other roles to the counsellor. Murgatroyd (1990) suggests that school counsellors become identified as part of the establishment. He reports that this created expectations and assumptions which delimits the pupil's perceptual field and "dominated the pupil's expectations of the counsellor role.... thus they become authority figures linked to the bureaucracy organisation of the school". In consequence few pupils, indicated a willingness to approach any of the counsellors with personal problems.

The fourth group of blocks emerging from the outcomes arise from stereotypical attitudes in society in relation to help seeking. While the response in the group interviews revealed a positive attitude in relation to questions about the types of people who seek counselling (p.91) and the circumstances in which people need counselling

(p.91) these were in marked contrast to the views emerging from the individual interviews (p.90). There was also a much less positive view reported when the groups discussed society's attitudes to these issues (p.126) and this is reflected in comments about how people would feel if others knew they were having counselling (p.92), stringent requirements for confidentiality (p.139) and the need for discretion in providing counselling services (p.140). Such discontinuities can be explained in various ways. It is possible that the group were eager to perform for me as an interviewer who was interested in (and presumably approved of) counselling. It could be that such positive views were regarded as more socially politically correct in the peer group. It could be that for these young people, as for others, it is easier to accept cognitively the concept of counselling for others than to accept it effectively and for me. This seems a likely explanation the discontinuity here paralleling ambivalent attitudes in society towards the validity and acceptability of counselling. I have often witnessed a similar incongruity in counsellors in training who find it hard to "recognise the value of taking for themselves what they offer as valuable to their clients." (Corey 1982 p.262). The deeper and less conscious emotional blocks to seeking help may lie out of awareness but come to the surface and become more explicit in the course of the discussion.

Prevalent attitudes in society that we should not have difficulties but if we have we should cope with them alone are tempered by tacit permission to seek help if necessary from family or close friends. The concept of deep emotional sharing with a previously unknown person is alien to most of us. The outcomes in this study suggested these attitudes are prevalent for young people in Shropshire. Studies elsewhere support this view. Mayor and Timms (1970) report that 9 out of 10 people suggested that they would turn first to informal networks for help.

Murgatroyd (1970) reports that young people expect to turn first to parents or friends. There is, however, again a discontinuity in the outcomes when we compare groups and individual responses on this issue. While the groups tended to be positive about the role of parents, family and close friends in helping with difficulties the individual interviews with young people and youth workers suggested a less positive picture. They reported that there was a limited ability to talk to parents and an expectation of a poor reaction if they did. In relation to friends they suggested a limited value in helping with severe difficulties and a tendency for individuals to isolate themselves rather than share with them. These discontinuities could be explained in that the young people interviewed had difficulties 'severe enough' for them to ask for help in counselling and the youth workers experience of counselling clients is often that they deal with young people with severe difficulties and the difficulties often relate to or result in difficulties in sharing with friends or parents. Mayer and Timms would lend support for this explanation thus while there is a general societal view that parents and friends are helpful "this is often not the case due to perceived inadequacy of such support for a variety of reasons including trust, inaccuracy of advice, loss of face and burdening someone else" (Mayer and Timms 1970).

The consequence of such societal stereotypes relating to acceptable sources of help is that they often block people in help seeking. Many become trapped in an ambivalent stance where it feels inappropriate to talk to 'a stranger' about intimate feelings and emotions but it also feels impossible to share with those 'close' to them. (p.133). This seems to be particularly true when the feelings we need to express run counter to other societal stereotypes for example when young men need to share "non-masculine"

feelings such as sadness and hurt and women need to share “non-feminine” emotions such as anger (p.128) This was clearly exemplified by one young man who when talking about sharing feelings said “we just don’t do we?” (CNE); a comment which implies no choice and no explanation. This cultural context is likely to generate deep unconscious blocks to entering a counselling relationship particularly when the nature of that relationship is not understood.

The second major group of factors relevant to the effective operation of a Youth Counselling Service in Shropshire which emerged from the data relate to the ways in which access to a counselling service can be facilitated. These factors fall into two sub-groups relating to the design of the service and the ways in which the service can be promoted with young people principally through process of education and information.

FACTORS RELATING TO THE DESIGN OF THE SERVICE

From the discussions with young people a clear picture emerges of the design of a youth counselling service which would be acceptable and therefore accessible to them. Significantly the design addresses most of the blocks identified above.

The data suggests that young people have a clear picture of the nature of the relationship they need in order to share their difficulties (p3). Happily this mirrors the 'core conditions' (Rogers 1957) of most models of counselling and is based on a listening, non-directive equal relationship in which the individual's right to confidentiality and autonomy is respected.

A central feature of a youth counselling service identified by these young people is confidentiality. As recorded by Feaviour (1994) in his study "The importance of confidentiality, has been reiterated time and again." There is government recognition that "young people are unlikely to use a service if they are not reassured by confidentiality". (Health of the Nation Key Area Handbook 1993). Without assurance of confidentiality a service will have little credibility. Unfortunately there is much confusion and controversy around this issue. (See Children's Legal Centre 1989 review of confidentiality). Paradoxically the ability to guarantee confidentiality often decreases as the seriousness of the problem increases. The belief that without increased levels of confidentiality young people will not use services has encouraged many Youth Counselling services to negotiate tougher levels of confidentiality than normally available in local authorities where there may be strict interpretations of the Children's Act. Confidentiality is a complex issue which needs to be carefully considered. The central requirement is that there is clarity and clear contracting so that young people understand their situation and therefore have choice about what to reveal. (Rayment 1994).

Informality is identified as an important characteristic in a youth counselling service in this study. Feaviour (1994 p39) suggests that “Informality is about encouraging attendance by reducing the rules of belonging.” He suggests that this informality is not just about the look or feel of the premises but also about the attitudes being conveyed. The outcomes in this study suggest that it is particularly important to young people because it affords them the opportunity to explore the nature of the help being offered to them before making commitment to it. This is important in relation to the likely nature of the relationship given their expectations derived from other relationships with adults. In addition to the nature of the relationship described above they often want to confirm their right to withdraw if they wish and to retain some power and control. Informality also seems relevant to the ambivalence of stance in relation to ‘knowing the person’ they talk to. In the study some young people shared that they would be unwilling to talk to a stranger while others said that this would have advantages (p.133). Similarly Porteous and Fisher (1980) report that “quite a number indicated they would prefer to talk to someone they didn’t know.” Informality offers a choice to check out a previously unknown person before committing to the process.

A related preference is for an integrated service, where counselling is offered alongside other services such as advice and information. There seem to be a number of advantages to such a model. The purpose of an individual using the service is less obvious to ‘onlookers’ thus protecting privacy and preventing labelling. It also offers an opportunity to ‘check out’ the ethos of the service and the organisation in order to extrapolate the likely response if deeper difficulties are shared. The Youth Workers interviewed were clear that this is a common process with young people (p.133). The preference for an integrated service

seems also to relate to uncertainty about the type of help needed and “validity” of the problems and thus the appropriateness of a request for help. The validity of an integrated service is supported elsewhere (Feavious 1994) and according to Mayor (quoted in Feavious 1996 p8) “it seems the most successful agencies have been those which can provide a full range of counselling support and befriending information and advice concentrating on the particular user.”

An important aspect of such a generalist approach is that it offers the client choice about the nature of the help they receive. As Feavious (1994) points out young people are likely to shy away from problem centred services while services offering “information from housing to abuse means that a young person is not identified with a particular label.” This is particularly important in the light of stereotypes as described above relating to people who need help in counselling. In particular it is important that services are not seen as part of a network that might diagnose them as ill or a problem. According to Tyler (1978 p53) “it is essential that young people are treated as mentally healthy whilst recognising that we all have problems.” In this respect the generalist approach offering a range of service promotes a more positive image than that associated with the word counselling which may have negative connotations.

Other features identified as important characteristics of an accessible youth counselling service included choice, accessibility, flexibility and responsiveness and that it is a free service. According to Feavious (1994) accessibility has the effect of “enabling young people through minimising apprehension.”

The characterises of a youth counselling service suggested by young people in this study replicate most of the main characteristics indicated as important in the studies carried out by Feaviour (1994) and Murgatroyd (1970). While there may be some variations in terminology and priority there is a substantial common core. These characteristics are symbolic of an underlying philosophy and value base to the work. Feaviour (1994) describes the main elements of this base as Empowerment, Participation, Equality of Opportunity, Empathy, Genuineness and Respect, claiming that “generally the philosophical stance is probably best described as a combination of humanistic person centred approaches and the core principles of the Youth Service.” (Feaviour 1994 p9).

The outcomes of this study suggest that young people are able to discriminate those services operating from such an “acceptable” value base from those operating from an unacceptable perspective. Murgatroyd’s (1970) study would support this view in so far as he shows school counsellors seen as servants of the institution were not approached. In contrast Hooper (1978) demonstrated that when the school counsellors were more ‘open’ they were used and unlike in the school studied by Murgatroyd the children were quite willing to approach the counsellor with such problems.

FACTORS RELATING TO INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Many of the blocks described above arose from ignorance of the counselling process. The requirements indicated by young people mirror almost exactly what is being offered in Counselling at least in the model on offer in Shropshire through the Youth Service. Unfortunately the service and its potential clients are separated by a chasm of

ignorance filled with a lack of information, and a lack of trust arising from transferred expectations derived in other relationships with adults and a plethora of stereotypical images related to help-seeking and 'appropriate helpers.' The challenge for those of us seeking to access this "Difficult to Reach" group (Dryden 1994) into counselling is to bridge this credibility gap.

The strategies for building such bridges and the issues which need to be addressed are suggested in the outcomes. A principle task is to provide information and education in relation to counselling. Practical information is needed in relation to where, when and how counselling can be obtained. In addition education needs to give young people an insight into some common difficulties for young people and the coping strategies they adopt to deal with these. This can help young people identify when they need help and show that their difficulties are comprehensible and acceptable.

An important focus is the nature of the counselling process. While creating an understanding of the non-directive nature of most counselling may be a disappointment to those who would want to be 'told' what to do it may serve as an encouragement to others who fear direction. It is also a powerful challenge to stereotypical images of relationships with adults. In addition it may mean that those who do enter counselling are clearer about what to expect and less likely to be disappointed by the process. As Patton and Walker (1990) point out counsellors who fail to address the inaccurate preconceptions of clients "risk mutual disappointment and premature termination of counselling."

The nature of the counselling relationship is a central issue to address. As described above negative transferential expectations of relationships with adults are a major block for many young people. The nature of the counselling relationship with its base in the 'core conditions' (Rogers 1957) and offering equality, confidentiality and choice must be spelled out to young people. In addition stereotypical attitudes about the appropriate problems and the sort of people who need counselling needs to be challenged.

Interestingly young people themselves suggest that the best form of education in these areas is experiential. (see p.146). Feaviour (1994) supports this view stating that "information giving requires a relationship to enable people to examine it and make it relevant to their experiences".

Giving out leaflets is not enough. Wherever possible young people should be given the opportunity to meet and talk with counsellors to allow them experience of an equal relationship. Education and information needs also to be aimed at the wider population to change societal attitudes to help seeking and to challenge inaccurate stereotypes. This is particularly important for those adults in contact with young people who could be important sources of referral and support.

Often these people have little knowledge of counselling and what it has to offer. Freeman's (1973) study for example showed that amongst secondary school teachers "attitudes were generally favourable though there was evidence of considerable ignorance about the counsellors role and also of doubts about confidentiality.

The image of a service influences who comes and the problems they bring. It is important that the image offered by a Youth Counselling Service is acceptable to young people. Publicity needs to reflect the 'user-friendly' nature of the service. In this respect it seems important to stress the informal nature of the service, the commitment to choice and the voluntary nature of the relationship. The opinions and attitudes of the peer group (see p.121) are powerful in making counselling acceptable and this needs to be borne in mind when devising publicity.

CHAPTER 7

WIDER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Information from numerous sources indicate the need for counselling services for young people. Porteous and Fisher (1980 p 69) report for example that their study indicated that “Few young people claimed to have no problems and a considerable number have many” and that “20 - 40 % of young people had no regular source of advice or understanding” (Porteous and Fisher 1980 p69). As discussed in the introduction to this study the situation is reflected in soaring statistics which witness the distress of young people for instance the rise in suicide rates by 71% for young men in the last 10 years.

The comments of young people in this study suggest that while many say they could seek help from parents or friends, in reality when faced with difficulties these sources of help are inadequate, either because relations with parents are bad or because the nature of their problem precludes discussion with parents or peers. The present study suggests that young people recognise a need for an alternative source of help. While the need for a youth counselling service seems clear the willingness of individual young people to ask for such help is less evident. As Cruttwell (1986) points out many service providers are aware that young people do not take up services available to them. Porteous and Fisher (1980) suggest that whether a service is wanted depends not only on the level of need but on many other factors relating to the individual and the service “which facilitate or hinder them coming together” (Porteous and Fisher 1980). The outcomes in this study clarify in detail the nature of the factors which

block young people in accessing help from a youth counselling service and suggest those features which could facilitate access. The coincidence of views expressed here with views reported in other studies (Porteous and Fisher 1980; Feaviour 1994; Cruttwell 1996)) suggest that the outcomes of this study may have relevance in designing and operating youth counselling services outside Shropshire.

While the study focused on young people it seems likely that the outcomes may reflect difficulties in society generally and more specifically in other “difficult to reach” groups (Dryden 1994) in using counselling services. In a study of “Coping and Help seeking in the UK Population”, Barker et al (1990) discovered that the respondents tended to endorse informal rather than formal helpers and a preference for coping strategies involving behavioural, cognitive or avoidance methods in preference to help seeking. Often only when higher levels of symptoms were experienced were people likely to seek help,

“It may be that their experience of psychological distress overcomes the usual inhibitions about discussing personal problems with others.”

(Barker et al 1990 p283).

Resistance to formal help seeking with personal difficulties is more marked in some sections of the population. It is widely recognised that men are less likely to use counselling services than women (Bennett 1995; Goodey 1973; Hooper 1978). The present study suggests that this gender difference is present for young people and is generated by stereotypical social attitudes. Hooper supports this and states that “boys are reluctant to consult about emotional and familial issues because the rules of society proclaim that men must not appear weak.” The way forward suggested by Bennett is

that “Somewhere in the world outside counselling we have to encourage men to believe that the acknowledgement of their vulnerability does not diminish their potency.” (Bennett 1995).

In a similar vein members of other minority groups are deterred from seeking counselling by stereotypical images which they have interjected from the societal matrix which surrounds them and which suggest that either they are unsuitable for counselling or counselling is unsuitable for them. Such stereotypes must be addressed if access to counselling for these groups is to be improved (d’Ardenne 1989, Chaplin 1988). As Bennett (1995) expresses it we need to “become interested in the social pressures that produce and reinforce social images.”

The way forward suggested in the present study is by providing education and information and raising awareness. The focus thus moves towards the political arena.

Within the “counselling world” itself however there is also work to be done.

Increasingly we are recognising that it is inadequate for us to “just put up posters advertising services and expect people to go to them.... such expectations are doomed to failure unless (young) people’s fears and worries are addressed” (Cruttwell 1996).

Dryden (1994) points out that in relation to groups that are “difficult to reach” and “tend to be underrepresented in our counselling services we need to do research to discover why these groups do not come forward for counselling.” We need to ask ourselves “in what ways do we need to change our counselling services in order to make them more applicable to these groups.” Dryden (1994).

In the exploration of young people's perception of counselling a number of issues have emerged from the outcomes which may be of wider relevance both in the wider population and in the difficult to reach groups, in particular stereotypical attitudes as discussed above. Of equal importance is the image of counselling and counselling services. According to Goodey the image influences "the type of person who is prepared to use them and the type of problem they present when they come" (Goodey 1973). According to Feaviour (1994) whole communities who do not access services due to the image they convey; he describes many such services as being "steeped in the White, Middle Class benevolent tradition with corresponding attitudes (Feaviour 1994).

It seems clear that if counselling is to be acceptable to the wider population and to "difficult to reach groups" (Dryden 1994) a drastic remodelling of the image will be necessary. The present study suggests that some of this can be achieved by painting a clearer picture of what counselling is and how it works and clarification of the nature of the counselling relationship. It also seems necessary to design services to be 'user friendly' in their mode of delivery. It is clear that we cannot assume "that the clients are there anyway and that we the experts have only to decide what to do with them" (Patten and Fisher 1994 p67).

This realisation may however require us to undertake a deeper review of counselling that goes beyond looking at how it is packaged and marketed, it seems appropriate to review the process itself. To quote Clarkson

“Psychotherapy and psychological counselling have in recent years come under increasing attack for their irrelevance to the real world of people who come to us for help. Counselling psychology will have to address the fact that it draws its roots from approaches, models and roots that essentially began a century ago and therefore in some very important ways needs to be modified in terms of the changed cultural context in which we now live.” (Clarkson 1995).

She goes on to suggest that we need to look at issues such as greater accountability, short term interventions, flexibility from theoretical models and rapid responsiveness. The present study suggests that we need to add access and acceptability to this list.

A significant outcome in this study is the stress the respondents placed on a need for an informal and integrated service. As indicated above these preferences related to blocks arising from transference fears arising in other relationships which could be removed by checking out the agency ethos in particular in relation to issues of power and choice. In my experience even a service offering such characteristics would remain “inaccessible” for some young people. For many it is the person they are prepared to trust not the agency. This suggests that “as most people bring their problems to informal rather than professional helpers,” we need to look at the feasibility of designing effective programmes to facilitate and improve the help that informal helpers provide. In terms of counselling this seems to involve counsellors operating in multiple roles in relation to clients. There is a parallel here with accessing and supporting counselling through community groups (d’Ardenne 1989 p11) and through awareness raising groups (Chaplin 1988). Dual or multiple roles in relation to potential clients

(for example youth worker and counsellor) can enable young people to check out and approach counsellors more easily and thus build the confidence they need to take the difficult step into formal counselling. Ideally a client needing formal counselling help will be willing to renegotiate tighter boundaries as the relationship develops. Clearly the depth of the work which is possible will be influenced by the extent to which firm boundaries can be established.

Such a lack of clear boundary definition and role separation is anathema to the purist counselling tradition. For many of us working in agencies which are geographically isolated, client specific, badly resourced and without appropriate supporting networks such ethical niceties are not part of real life and the presence of the ideal model of a tightly bounded relationship serves mainly to highlight the role conflicts which we need to negotiate and work through in practice. It seems that the counselling establishment needs to review some of its traditional attitudes to accommodate the work which is in progress.

While the aim of the study was to explore young people's perceptions of counselling in relation to the establishment and operation of a youth counselling service in Shropshire and was thus context specific the outcomes of the study throw up issues of relevance to other Youth Counselling Services and indeed to the whole issue of access to counselling in the population at large and particularly for other "difficult to reach groups". These issues concern personal inhibitors which are supported by societal stereotypes, and the packaging and promotion of counselling. Some interesting issues

are also raised which question the relevance and value of some traditional attitudes in counselling and raise questions for further study. In particular questions related to appropriate models and the desirability and necessity of role separation in agency work stand out for me as areas worthy of further research.

CHAPTER 8

EVALUATION

PROVISION FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

Qualitative Research is frequently criticised on the grounds that researches using these methods merely find out what they knew already” (McLeod 1994 p.98).

In order to reduce this possibility I have adopted the following provisions for trustworthiness.

- I have tried to clearly identify and describe the purpose of the study.
- I have explained the selection of the sample.
- In writing up the study I have clarified details of the procedures for data collection.
- I have made a number of strands in the data collection process in order to balance bias.
- I have described in detail the process of data analysis and how emerging themes were selected.
- I compared outcomes with documents, research and experiences from other sources in order to explore credibility and relevance/applicability outside the immediate context. (see pages 41 to 54).

- I kept a Research Journal, field notes and transcripts of interviews as well as photos and records of the data collection and analysis processes thus establishing a clear Audit Trail which I have used to check out the emergence of the outcomes and explain them.
- I used other knowledgeable experts in the initial stages of the study. This reduced personal bias and provided some objectivity.
- I have used my Research Supervisor to check out my perceptions and decisions as the study progressed.

Epoche is a process in which a researcher engages to “remove or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumption regarding the phenomena under investigation.” (Katz 1987 p.36-7 quoted in Maykut and Morehouse 1964 p.123) I think this is an important process for me. I have recorded some of my ideas, and perceptions about the study from the beginning in order to try to avoid setting out to “prove my prejudices.” I have discussed the study with my Counselling Supervisor and my Research Supervisor to maintain my self-awareness in the course of the study.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore young people’s perceptions of counselling which are relevant to the creation and operation of a Youth Counselling Service in Shropshire. The focus of the study was thus context specific. The clear definition of focus helped it to achieve its aim and the data provides a rich and detailed picture.

Much market research tends to be based on quantitative studies aimed at establishing averages and norms and maximising target populations. Qualitative research focuses on deeper understanding of individual perceptual worlds. This approach has been valuable in the present study because of its relevance to designing services and publicity which may be needed only by a minority or by the majority for only a minority of the time, thus 'average' views can be misleading. The discontinuity between the views expressed in the groups and those expressed in the individual interviews highlights the value of this approach.

The use of individual and group interviews is positive aspect of this study. A major criticism of the qualitative approach is that the researcher can become trapped in a hermeneutic circle, in essence setting out to prove their own prejudices. An important tool in countering this is to be aware of anything which arises in the data which seems unexpected, strange or confusing since this is likely to occur when our preconceptions are being challenged. One of the main purposes of introducing the third strand in the data collection process, the group interviews, was to allow for some of the emerging themes from the initial data analysis to be 'tested' for validity with a wider audience. I was therefore looking for instances of confirmation or disconfirmation of my propositions in the group interviews.

While there was a high level of agreement between views expressed by young people in individual interviews and youth workers there were areas of discontinuity between the views expressed in these individual interviews and the group interviews. In particular the group responses were much more positive in relation to their perceived value of parents and friends as sources of help. This can be explained by the difference between

the general view in society about the value of informal support which is not reflected in the experience of the individual young people all of whom had difficulties for which they had sought counselling or in the experience of youth workers who in their counselling work often deal with young people who have sought formal help because of the inadequacy or inappropriateness of others sources. The use of both sources in the data collection created a more balanced view and also highlighted the discontinuity in real life which reflects the discontinuity of the data viz that the general views of society are not always concurrent with the real experience of the individual in difficulty.

The coincidence of the outcomes of this study with those of studies done elsewhere suggests that the present outcomes may have wider applicability. In particular the identified blocks to accessing counselling may be relevant to other age groups. Many of us have become aware of previously unchallenged introjects from childhood which drive our behaviour. On a personal level I can identify with many of the blocks suggested here as being significant for me before I entered therapy. Some of the identified strategies for improving access may also have relevance to the wider population and particularly for difficult to reach groups. The insights obtained here may also be of relevance to others wishing to access young people for example Health Promotion workers and Youth Workers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was highly context specific and the sample size was limited. Both of these factors reduce its validity in terms of extrapolating its findings to other situations.

The lack of space necessitated some editing of data. Data was selected on the basis of uniqueness rather than frequency and there is therefore no indication of the strength of support for particular perceptions.

The way I have engaged with the data is clearly influenced by my own bias, prejudice and preconceptions. The way I have ordered and categorised the data and decided on emerging themes and implication clearly relates to my view of reality. I have tried to limit this distortion by the Provision for Trustworthiness cited above (p.62).

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore deeply and describe clearly young people's perceptions of counselling and to use the insights gained as the basis for designing a model of delivery for a Youth Counselling Service in Shropshire which would maximise access for young people.

It seems entirely appropriate to consult service users about the design of services but my interest in their views was deeper than practical considerations about service design and included their wider perceptions of counselling since I felt that decisions about whether to access counselling services are rooted in these. In order to maximise access we need to understand those perceptions which young people carry which may block or facilitate their access to counselling services so that we can design services, publicity, education and outreach work around these issues. The study was based on the belief that young people themselves hold the key to accessing this hard to reach group. The most appropriate design to adopt for the research was thus an emergent design which allowed the respondents to guide the direction of the study. I needed to achieve a deep insight into the perceptual world of the participants and thus interviews with respondents were chosen as more appropriate than use of questionnaires or fixed instruments. The sample used in the study is described in detail above (p.18).

The interview transcripts were analysed using the constant comparative method designed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This involved photocopying, coding and unitising the data and then grouping the units into categories of similar meaning. Each category was described by a prepositional statement. Initially four main categories emerged. In Appendix I the data is fully presented within these categories in the form of verbatim extracts from the interviews with little additional comment from the author except that needed to connect the data and arrange it into a meaningful sequence. From this it became clear that the four categories could be regrouped to form two main categories, the first concerning those factors which block access to counselling and the second concerned with those factors which facilitate access. In the outcomes section the main emerging themes are summarised under these two headings.

The factors which block access to counselling include:

- Internal blocks which relate to the way young people perceive themselves and their difficulties.
- Perceptions of counselling per se, in particular a lack of understanding of the counselling process, the counselling relationship, the nature of difficulties suitable for counselling, negative stereotypical images of clients and a lack of knowledge about help available and how to access it.
- The transference of expectations from other relationships with adults onto the counselling relationship, in particular a lack of confidence in adults to share their perceptual world, a lack of trust in their right to confidentiality and an expectation of a negative/punitive response.

- Prevalent attitudes and values in society in relation to how to deal with difficulties, in particular the views that help seeking is negative, that talking about problems does not help, that it is shameful to share deep feelings (particularly for men).
- Societal stereotypes of 'appropriate helpers' which suggest that help should only be sought from a known person either within the family or a close friend and that sharing with 'strangers' is unacceptable (although acknowledged by some to be attractive).

The factors which facilitate access to counselling include:

- A clear and trustworthy promise of confidentiality.
- A counselling service offering the characteristics young people want. Specifically they require it to be discrete, accessible, informal, integrated with other services and free of charge.
- Promotion of the service by education, outreach work and publicity aimed at raising awareness and changing perceptions in order to remove perceptual blocks in individuals and in the peer group.

The discussion of the outcomes presented above (p.41) indicates considerable support for the outcomes of the present study in the literature reporting findings elsewhere. This coincidence of views suggests that the outcomes of this study may be of some relevance elsewhere in understanding how young people view counselling and how service design can be used to facilitate access by addressing blocks to service use.

It seems also that the outcomes could have relevance in understanding inhibitions to formal help seeking in other groups and individuals within society. In particular the

stereotypical attitudes of society towards seeking help and help seekers seem relevant. Issues, of loss of power and control seem likely to be of relevance to the minority groups and the lack of understanding of the counselling process and relationships may be relevant in the wider population. The transference of expectations derived in other relationships onto the counselling relationship is a common phenomena in counselling and may discourage many adults from seeking help.

Eminent writers such as Dryden (1994) and Clarkson (1995) both cited above have begun to raise awareness within the counselling community of the need to review its current theories, process and practice in the light of “the changed cultural context” (Clarkson 1995) in which it now operates. Future research indicated by this study includes the following: further investigation re blocks and facilitation of access among a wider sample; the advantages/disadvantages of offering an integrated service; implications of less formal “counselling” interventions; the implications of multiple roles for counsellors and clients; appropriate ways of “reaching out” to potential clients and appropriate content of publicity materials aimed at raising awareness of the possibilities and process of counselling.

The primary aim of this study was to explore and present the perceptions of young people in Shropshire which are of relevance to the creation, operation and promotion of a Youth Counselling Service. I concur with Feaviour’s (1994) view that

“If we are to provide effective services, it is crucial that we listen to the users. Youth information, advice and counselling services will not operate to their full potential if they do not understand young people. It is vital that we listen.” (Feaviour 1994).

This is not enough, however, for having listened and reflected here we need to act on the basis of what we have learned. According to (Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p147) “the ultimate test of trustworthiness of a qualitative study is whether we believe the findings strongly enough to act on them.”

The perceptions of young people explored here and the outcomes which flow from them will provide the basis for determining the shape of the Youth Counselling Service in Shropshire. The true test of the validity of this research will therefore be our success in accessing young people to this service.

In light of the outcomes of this study I would make the following recommendations in setting up a Youth Counselling Service:

- In practical terms the service should aim to be accessible, discrete, flexible, responsive, informal, free and offer continuity and an integrated service. A clear and firm Confidentiality contract is essential.
- The service needs to be promoted by outreach work aimed at raising awareness and altering young people’s attitudes to counselling. Such work should use experiential techniques whenever possible. Education and Information needs to focus on the following issues: common difficulties which can be helped in counselling, stereotypical attitudes towards help seeking; appropriate helpers; the power of counselling to help; the nature of counselling and the counselling relationship; confidentiality.
- The model of counselling employed must be acceptable to young people, particularly in the light of transference expectations about the balance of power in relationships with adults.

- The reluctance of young people to seek formal help can be addressed by acknowledging and strengthening the capacity to help of those who are in contact with young people in other ways and in whom they trust. This may involve improving the skills of these workers to enable them to offer counselling and to renegotiate appropriate boundaries in order to do this. Alternatively it may be appropriate to raise their awareness of the possibilities of counselling and their referral skills.

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APPENDIX 1

OUTCOMES

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF

COUNSELLING

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT COUNSELLING IS LIKE

WERE:

'I don't know what counselling is. I've never had to go and see one.'

(CNW)

'I see it as someone to go and talk to if you can't speak to your parents or something like that and it's really getting on top of you the problem.'

(CNW)

'Mm, I don't know, I think they'd use it as a last resort, you know if they couldn't turn to their friends or anything like that really.' (CNW)

'Just like talking to someone and telling them your problems and seeing if they can give you an answer.' (CNE)

'Well you help people understand their problems.' (CNE)

'Options you can choose which way you want to go yourself. Let you choose which way you want to go.' (CNE)

'Advice and stuff.' (CNE)

'Confidence.' (CNE)

'It's all based on trust really isn't it.' (CNE)

'Building it up as you go along.' (CNE)

'Pressure, pressing you with hard questions.' (S.M.)

'As long as you want to.' (CNE)

'I don't know, I've never been.' (S.M.)

'You wouldn't know them.' (S.M.)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF WHAT COUNSELLORS WERE:

'They counsel loads of people. Counsellors are put them questions quite a lot aren't they.' (CNE)

A lack of judgement - i.e. Acceptance.

*'People judge you by it as well. No. They're trained not to aren't they'.
(CNE)*

'I suppose they've got an opinion but they've got to keep it to themselves.'

(CNE)

'They'd be really nice to you.' (Y.W. 17)

'I think it would be my embarrassment.' (CNE).

Empathy

'I think they'd understand.' (S.M.)

'As if they know exactly what you're going through.' (S.M.)

'They'd be friendly at first.' (S.M.)

But see their giving help as being impersonal.

'Their job and stuff.' (SM)

'Yeah, all the time the same problems.' (CNE)

'Unnatural. Not relaxed, like.' (SM)

'Someone's there and they're weird.' (CNW)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT HAPPENS IN COUNSELLING

WERE:

'The process wasn't understood - we were ignorant about it.' (Y.W. 22)

'It's just sort of like having a chat really....with somebody you can trust'.

(Youth Worker)

'It was almost like having a chat really.... they do something weird and strange and it just kind of sorts you out like that.' (Y.W. 17)

'I had this image of being sat down, sit here and talk through your problems'. (Y.W. 17)

'There is still that feeling that you are going to be told what to do, it's a bit like a teacher standing up and telling you how to organise your life'.

(Youth Worker)

'An official who would tell you.... I didn't really want to be told to go home, have a big dinner, put on weight, get on with it OK.' (Y.W. 17)

'Cause basically it meant that I didn't have to think about it myself.'

(Y.W. 17)

'They think you're the one with the power, you're the one with the authority or the position or whatever.... Sometimes you have to step back and remind them what it's about.' (Youth Worker)

'There's no knowledge of counselling or how it can help or that any process can help, that what you are can actually be available to change.'
(Youth Worker)

'I think that at the time if I knew fully what the concept of counselling was I probably wouldn't have wanted to because I just couldn't face the thought of having to just sit there and go through everything.' (Y.W. 17)

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH
PEOPLE NEED COUNSELLING WERE:**

Family

Divorce/Marriage

Death/Bereavement

Race

Drugs

Alcohol

Rape

Abuse

Aids

Illness - cancer, disability

Harassment

Bullying, Physical Abuse

Nightmares

Fostering

'Somehow needing help is defined as only in crises, in extreme circumstances.' (Youth Worker)

'If there was a serious problem, yeah.' (SM)

'I wouldn't think they went to a counsellor with a little problem.' (CNE)

'No, it's not bad, but you'd probably feel silly telling them about a little problem and you'd think just forget about it, you know, carry on, don't need to see a counsellor' (CNW)

'Yeah, because if you've got a minor problem you might think oh I can't go along to a counsellor like it's not big enough to do that'. (SM)

'You're not being abused, you're not living in squalor, you've got enough money, what problems could you have?' (Y.W.. 15)

'Yeah, they haven't got a problem unless it's big.' (Y.W. 15)

'It's almost like you need a big problem and I didn't know what the actual underlying thing was, I just knew I feel depressed and I don't know why.' (Y.P. 17)

'Yeah, because then he'd try and talk to you and you could try and sort it out with them until you realise what the problem is.' (CNW)

'It wasn't really worth mythering anyone with my little problem.'

(Young woman 23 who was being abused)

'I think it's got to be big to see a psychiatrist but I think a youth worker is there to talk to you.' (Y.P. 15)

'I don't think you can go through your life without needing to talk to somebody about something.' (Y.W. 15)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE NEED

COUNSELLING WERE:

'Adequate people sort out their own problems Only inadequate people ask for help.' (Youth Worker)

'The good bereaved is the one who copes and still goes on, not the one who breaks down'. (Youth Worker)

'Hasn't got anybody else they can talk to so they've got to go and talk to a complete stranger you're a really sad person.' (Y.W. 17)

If you're a person with a problem your alone and inadequate and that's not what you want to be you've got to be in a wonderful relationship and a wonderful family, that's what's kind of pumped into you.' (Y.W. 17)

'It's very negative, very negative, emotionally inadequate person who cannot cope.' (Y.W. 17)

'There is a stigma of actually asking for help.' (Y.W. 17)

'Only people who are screwed up in the head go to see counsellors. I think that's a general view of a lot of young people.' (Y.W. 15)

'You're not normal.' (Youth Worker)

'You've got to be really disturbed, you've got to be mad to have counselling haven't you? ... you're on the edges.' (Youth Worker)

'Very secretive, very shameful, there is something wrong with you, you're mad or bad.' (Youth worker)

'For people who are really crazy.' (Y.P. 23)

'Often young people feel well I'm not as damaged as that, they're really screwed up.' (Youth Worker)

'It's like rich America actors go off and speak to their therapist that's really quite nice psychotherapy kind of stuff and sort of intelligent really understanding the world type stuff.' (CNE)

'I'd just think that they hadn't got anybody to talk to.' (CNW)

'Mm, people who feel they can't open up to their family and friends and you feel as if you can't touch your family or your friends or anyone else, you just need someone totally different.' (CNE)

'I think anybody could need counselling because they could just be hiding it.' (CNE)

'Yeah, it's just like where you are in y our life.' (SM)

'If you're stressed out it doesn't mean you're mad does it.' (SM)

'Like if somebody was dead, your family or something and you went for counselling you haven't done nothing wrong have you.' (SM)

'You're just depressed and you need someone to help you out with it, don't you.' (SM)

'I'd feel "Good on him" basically.' (CNW)

'Some counselling is for married couples or older people, I don't see it for younger people.' (CNW)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW IT WOULD FEEL IF OTHERS KNEW YOU WERE HAVING COUNSELLING WERE:

'I think a lot of women would be afraid of telling somebody that they're going to see a counsellor.' (CNW)

'I don't think they'd tell their mates really, I think keep it away from their friends but go anyway but try not to let them know about it.' (CNW)

'They'd probably be shocked I think.' (CNW)

'But I still think boys like to keep up their macho act in front of their mates.' (SM)

'You don't worry about anything if you're man.' (SM)

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OFTEN IGNORANT OF WHAT HAPPENS IN
COUNSELLING THEIR FEARS INCLUDE:

Fear f the Process

'This idea of therapy being about talking heads.... many young people are not into sitting down talking anywhere for an hour.... it's like being at school or being controlled and sort of having to sit there with a powerful person.' (Youth Worker)

'I think it was kind of sit down talk for an hour and be told what to do.' (Y.W. 17)

'You get embarrassed sometimes.' (CNE)

'I think you just get embarrassed sitting down talking to someone else.'
(CNE)

'You don't know what they're talking about. So they're talking like she was saying weird questions, like you think what she on about, what's he on about.' (S.M.)

'They make you talk about things you don't want to talk about.' (S.M.)

'Like if you've been through something in your life and you don't really want to go over it again they make you go over it, strain, get it out of you even if you don't want to.' (S.M.)

'You wouldn't feel comfortable. Make people uncomfortable, yeah, and sort of like pushed to stuff that you don't want to do.' (S.M.)

'It's safer to keep it inside.... if you start talking about it it gets scary really, it gets sort of it's not really happening really, you can keep it under control.' (Youth Worker)

'so one of the problems of going to see a counsellor you wouldn't know what you were getting.' (CNW)

Fear of Telling

'very much, once you've committed yourself that's it.... somehow they would be chased up.... you shouldn't have started it if you weren't going to finish it.' (Youth Worker)

'I just felt that anything I was going to tell him he'd say straight back to my mum.' (Y.W. 15)

'I was always frightened of people saying like go to the doctor.... and he might take me away.... to Shelton.... that's for people who are really crazy and that used to go through my mind.' (Y.W. 23)

'You'd lose control'. (Y.W. 23)

'Just no sense of what happens next.... I had all of these questions going through my mind.' (Y.W. 23)

'They might talk to me or say something when all my friends were there.'
(Y.W. 17)

People might treat me differently.... dismiss or dislike me or even the opposite be really nice.... or somehow be singled out so other people would know.' (Y.W. 15)

'I don't generally trust people.... once you tell someone it goes to another person and as it goes through it gets more exaggerated.' (Y.W. 15)

'Although people would say it was confidential, you'd start thinking what if they went and did this and they went and did that. I suppose a lot of young people don't know what counselling is.' (CNW)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S IMAGES OF COUNSELLING COME FROM:

'What different people say.' (S.M.)

'Probably from various dramas and things I'd seen on TV.' (Y.W. 17)

'The Telly. The soaps.' (CNW)

'Yeah, and the news - Weirdo's.

People who are going to kill themselves.

*Victims of trauma, rape, abuse and those guilty of
child molesting.*

Also from stories about famous people like

Michael Jackson and Cantor. (CNE)

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF
THEMSELVES, THEIR DIFFICULTIES AND
WAYS OF COPING.**

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO
THEIR DIFFICULTIES WERE:**

For many young people their difficulties are an integral part of their world. They are to an extent confluent with them.

'That's how it is, I've learned to live with it, it's always been that way.'

(Y.W. 17)

'I didn't think it was affecting my life as much as it was. It was just something going on I did things just to cover it up, so I didn't really take it seriously. It was just something that's in your life, in the same way other things happened to you.' (Y.W. 23)

During adolescence there is growing awareness of the difficulty.

'At about 15/16 I started realising more and more and getting more and more angry. I started having more feelings about it. That is was so wrong and I had to do something.' (Y.W. 23)

'I think it was about 14.... when it all kind of focused.... beforehand it was kind of building up but I wasn't really aware of it.' (Y.W. 17)

As awareness grows associated feelings come to the surface.

'It kind of built up and built up for probably about a year and a half I think.... I just felt completely negative about myself.' (Y.W. 17)

'I felt I was bad.' (Y.W. 23)

'I felt I needed to be punished....' (Y.W. 23)

There is a sense in which their difficulty can become a part of their identity and be associated with a resultant feeling of powerlessness to change things.

'That sort of you know this is who I am.... I've got to cope with it, live with it....' (Youth worker)

'This powerlessness becomes almost a part of their identity, this is all I am, this is what I am worth. So it's taken inside rather than put out there as a problem I can do something about and get help with.. And this is a time when a young person's identity is being formed. It creates a lot of aggression and anger and resentment which goes very deep. It's almost like it's getting knitted into them. I am this problem.' (Youth Worker)

'It was that fear they were going to ask you to put a label on something you really couldn't identify.... it was like everywhere.' (Y.W. 17)

'It seems so big and it seems such a part of you.' (Youth Worker)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S COPING STRATEGIES INCLUDED:

Various coping strategies may be developed to help deal with these feelings these include:

- ***Emotional Isolation.***

'I was in the main group of friends in my year, and I was one of the most popular. It was lonely knowing I couldn't share this one big problem inside me.' (Y.W. 23)

'I did feel really isolated and I kind of felt stuck on my own.' (Y.W. 17)

- ***Antisocial Behaviour such as Violence, Drug Misuse, Gambling.***

'I guess this isn't just about young people.... not actually understanding the connection between what's going on in their lives and what's causing what's going on.... like being driven from inside without making any connection.'
(Youth Worker)

'Then they'd just deal with it on their own, perhaps there's no one else they can turn to' (SM)

'They're probably going to bottle it up and then they're going to get more stressed out and then probably take it out on their friends and make their friends worse.' (S.M.)

'Get into smashes and blaming everyone else.' (CNW)

- **Getting busy.**

'By doing loads of things.' (Y.W. 23)

- **Eating Disorders**

'And I discovered I could find a way of dealing with it with my eating and stuff.... I think that helped in quite a lot of ways. It helped me take away some of the guilt I was feeling. I suppose it was a way of punishing myself.... It gave me something else to think about and concentrate on It was quite exciting in a way it's like a BUZZ, like a massive BUZZ.' (Y.W. 23).

- **Depression**

'I just thought that nobody listens and nobody cares anyway and so there's no point.... at the time I felt in myself I was worthless and therefore why would anyone want to try and help me.' (Y.W. 17)

What appear to be the presenting problems are actually perceived by the individual as solutions.

For some young women their eating disorders are -

'Creating a problem that they can 'cope' with.' (Youth Worker)

'It was really just kind of cut off, I didn't think about anything else really, I just concentrated on like eating less calories and going out and doing more exercises and stuff instead of actually concentrating on where the problem was coming from.' (Y.W. 15)

'I thought I was really clever.' (Y.W. 23)

'It was easier than dealing with all the other stuff and I didn't know what it is.... it was all too big to try to comprehend.' (Y.W. 17)

There can be considerable ambivalence about dealing with these problems.

They may want to keep them....

Talking about her eating disorder -

'I thought I was coping as I was I didn't want to sort it out because that meant being something different to what I was at the time.... I suppose in

myself I was almost comfortable with it.... kind of better the devil you know than the devil you don't know. ' (Y.W. 17)

but they may also be a cry for help -

'I knew that I was hurting myself. ' (Y.W. 23)

'I used to get really angry because you know I wanted people to see by just looking at me but they didn't and then it would make me angry because there was nobody there. ' (Y.W. 23)

Similarly a suicide attempt may be both a solution to the problem of depression.

'There was nothing in particular just everything rolled into one. ' (Y.W. 15)

'I didn't think anybody cared I felt worthless, lost and sort of unimportant and like nobody cared. ' (Y.W. 15)

So that at the time -

'I just didn't think about it not working. ' (Y.W. 17)

but later she reflected

'I think it was probably a cry for help. ' (Y.W. 17)

Gradually there may be a change from wanting to be rescued by an adult to taking responsibility for dealing with difficulties.

'As you grow up you start to realise about responsibility.... I realised that it was me that had to do something. That nobody could magic it away.'

'I mean the second time I took an overdose was basically saying I need help. The first time I just lost everything, I didn't know what the hell to do and I really seriously wanted to kill myself.... the second time I was trying to say I'm not all right'' (Y.W. 15)

GETTING HELP. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTIES/ BLOCKS IN ASKING FOR HELP WITH PROBLEMS.

**REACHING OUT TO GET HELP IS DIFFICULT FOR MANY YOUNG
PEOPLE.**

'It took quite a long time to actually pluck up the courage to tell anyone.'
(Y.W. 17)

'It took me about 3 goes at least to try to work up the courage.' (Y.W. 17)

'I just phoned the Samaritans in the end and they said try talking to somebody at school.' (Y.W. 17)

'Yeah there is. I mean there's the whole thing you've got to accept, OK I've got a problem and I am going to have counselling.... it's kind of accepting that it's you that's having it in the first place.' (Y.W. 17)

Young people lack information about how and where to get help.

'Help is not available. Where do young people go?' (Youth Worker)

'Difficulty is not knowing where to go and what to do'. (Youth Worker)

'It was really hard knowing how to.... go about asking.... just saying you know.... I need help.' (Y.W. 23)

'I can remember everybody always being busy and you could never get them on their own.' (Y.W. 23)

'For a lot of young people counselling isn't accessible.' (Youth Worker)

Counselling?

'I didn't even know it existed at that age.' (Y.W. 23)

'Nobody ever seemed to talk about it.' (Y.W. 23)

'I thought of it but I didn't know where to get some.' (Y.W. 17)

'I didn't know anybody at the time.' (Y.P. 17)

*'It is just being able to approach somebody to ask.... that's the hardest part
being able to ask.... saying the words you know....'* (Y.W. 23)

**Young people are reluctant to share their difficulties and seek help because of their
fear of the likely response.**

'I just thought well he's going to have a go at me.' (Y.W. 17)

'I thought I'd get shouted at.' (Y.W. 23)

'They wouldn't believe me.' (Y.W. 23)

I thought they might say something like -

'Don't be stupid.' (Y.W. 23)

'You got yourself into this sort it out yourself.' (Y.W. 23)

'So that's your problem don't dump it on me.' (Y.W. 23)

'Stop causing trouble.' (Y.W. 17)

'What did you go and do that for, that is just a stupid thing to do.' (Y.W. 17 re overdose)

'Maybe they just won't listen.' (Y.W. 23)

'Adults just see things totally differently.... they are not willing to listen and take on a kids point of view.'

(Y.W. 23)

'A child's experience of adults is that they patronise them, ignore them, don't take them seriously.'

(Youth Worker)

'I don't think at that age there are many people around who would be willing to listen to you. That's how I felt anyway. They say she doesn't understand, but it's really them that doesn't really understand. It's like the adult's perspective is right and the child's perspective is to be dismissed.' (Y.W. 23)

'You know but the way old people treat younger people, yeah is like very often dismissive, it's very sort of come here, do that, go over there.' (Y.W. 15)

A lack of trust in their right to expect confidentiality is a major block to seeking help with difficulties.

'On the whole their expectation of adults is that they have a right to do virtually what they like and I don't think their expectation is of confidentiality.' (Youth Worker)

'They wouldn't see themselves as having any power to require confidentiality from those adults.'
(Youth Worker)

'In my case the teachers at school I definitely wouldn't want to go to them.... or my friends and peer group.... or my parents.' (Y.W. 17)

As I got older I realised it was my problem.... and that it would affect me and other people a lot more. I wanted more power over what happened.'
(Y.W. 23)

'Yeah I probably wouldn't tell the counsellor anything if I didn't think it was confidential.' (Y.W. 15)

'Safety in the sense of confidentiality. I think that really is a prime area.'
(Youth Worker)

'Confidentiality is maybe more about keeping control than about keeping it secret'. (Youth Worker)

'It's the clients control, it's this thing about being able to talk about it and come to a decision.' (Y.W. 17)

Young people are fearful of losing power and control over their difficulties.

'When you share something with somebody you instantly lose control of it. You lose power over it and somebody else can take it away and deal with it in a way they see fit and that's something we do to your children all the time.'
(Youth Worker)

'You would tell someone and you didn't know what would happen next.... I didn't want them to take it all away from me.... boss me around.... decides what would go on.' (Y.W. 23)

'You want to be allowed to argue and disagree'. (Y.W. 17)

'I thought my life was being completely taken over.' (Y.W. 17)

'Most of them tell you what to do.' (CNW)

'They sort of want to take over.' (CNE)

'So like you started this is my problem in here and then it belongs to everybody and they start making decisions about who does what about you.'

(Y.W. 15)

'I hate people making decisions for me.... it sort of puts me in a position that I don't know what to do.... because I feel as if I should do what they tell me....

but I want to do what I want to do.' (Y.W. 15)

'I guess in a way you've got to be very strong to go against the power of adults and with nearly every young person that I see at vulnerable times in their lives that assertion seems to be one of the factors that isn't there and the ability to say no.' (Youth Worker)

'In this sort of age group there's no power and it's hard to be assertive when you've got no power.'

(Youth Worker)

'He doesn't really want to know.... he says come and talk about problems but he doesn't mean it.' (Y.W. 15)

'.... feeling guilty about asking.... I suppose dumping my problem on somebody else.' (Y.W. 23)

'.... like maybe making it hard for someone else to deal with it or like would they know what to do.' (Y.W. 23)

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO SEEK HELP IS COLOURED BY THE
TRANSFERENCE OF EXPECTATIONS MOULDED IN PAST AND OTHER
CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS. THESE EXPERIENCES MAY
BLOCK OR FACILITATE THEM IN ASKING FOR HELP.**

**Many young people have negative expectations based on past experiences of
relationships with adults**

'Young people's perception would be that once you get into any relationship with an adult you are going to be told so if you say counsellors wouldn't do that.... young people would not believe that because their experience in other areas is that that's just not how it is.' (Youth Worker)

A young woman reflected that she had no confidence in the confidentiality promised by her psychiatrist.

'I didn't think it was confidential at all. It sort of made me feel I couldn't tell him anything important because he would tell my mum.' (Y.W. 15)

Where did this view Come from? She replied

'In school for example you'd tell somebody and they'd go and tell somebody else.' (Y.W. 15)

'Mm, I know that's about trust from adults having already been destroyed by them, giving false messages.' (Youth Worker)

But not all adults were seen as untrustworthy.

'I think it depends on who you're speaking to really.' (CNW)

'So some adults would tell you what to do?'

'Yeah and others could be really supportive.' (CNW)

'Right, different people would respond in different ways.' (CNE)

Young people's perception in response to relationships with teachers included:

'I don't find I can talk to them.' (Y.W. 15)

The main complaint was the insistence of teachers that parents are told of any difficulties they shared with them.

'He said do you think you ought to tell your parents and I said no, definitely not, I do not want to tell my parents.... He kind of kept on about telling my parents.... I really didn't feel equal enough to say no I don't want them told.... then I thought it was too late anyway because I had kind of told him now.... he got them into school and told them and it was horrible!!.' (Y.W. 17)

'I felt betrayed.' (CNE)

The lack of confidentiality seemed to go beyond telling parents.

*'If you tell the teacher in school you might as well put it in the fucking paper
I'll tell you..' (S.M.)*

'Like marmalade they spread it around.' (S.M.)

There were strong feelings that teaches were:

'not very respectful.' (CNW)

Not keen to help.

It's like they say go and see the school nurse if you've got problems, like just
pushing you away sort of thing.' (CNE)

and not very reliable.

*'He says come back next week and we'll sort it out.... he never sorts it out....
Or he forgets or something.'*
(CNE)

Some did however discriminate and made it clear that:

'It depends which teacher it is.' (CNE)

and reported some positive experiences.

'Sometimes they have teachers they get on well with and they'll say oh you can tell them anything, you know, they're all right, they're sound.' (Youth Worker)

Young people's perceptions arising in relationships with psychiatrists included:

In her relationship with her psychiatrist a young woman reported -

'I didn't feel equal. I just felt really small, powerless, yeah and worthless with a clever person telling me what to do....' (Y.W. 15)

'A sense of sort of one in a queue going through as opposed to feeling safe with somebody and like you were a friend.' (Y.W. 15)

'They established the problem but they didn't help me through it. The conclusion of seeing a psychiatrist was that what was wrong with me was that I had a very low opinion of myself, that was what I was told and then I just didn't see them anymore....' (Y.W. 15)

'I felt I was being pressured.... they wanted explanations for how I was feeling but I couldn't explain.' (Y.W. 15)

'I couldn't tell him anything, there was nothing to talk about.... and that was mainly because they were being too powerful and not listening so I didn't feel safe and I couldn't share my real problems.' (Y.W. 15)

Not surprisingly she concluded -

'I haven't got a very high opinion of psychiatrists. Basically it was shit.'
(Y.W. 15)

Young people's perceptions arising from relationships with counsellors included:

'I kind of saw her once and I just thought it was really horrible. It was all how do you feel saying that? and like I don't feel anything say that!.' (Y.W. 17)

'I just thought it was too hard. It was too difficult to go back.' (Y.W. 17)

She was ambivalent about being given the choice to return.

'If I'd made an appointment I'd definitely have gone back because it was kind of I've got to go.'
(Y.W. 17)

'It was great not feeling pressured to go back, like I had a choice.' (Y.W. 17)

For another young woman her counselling experience was very positive.

'He listened to everything.... he helped me through everything.' (S.M.)

Young people's perceptions arising from relationships with youth workers included:

'But with Youth Workers I think they are doing it because they want to help people. So that feels somehow like you're more real, more important as a person'' (Y.P. 15)

'I'd talked to XXX and I know she's not the kind of person who tells people what to do.... she's somebody I can trust.... and I meant that's saying something that she'd be prepared to give time.... it means they actually care.'
(Y.W. 15)

Young people's perceptions in response to relationships with doctors included:

'If you go to your doctor for help you get a prescription and good advice.'
(Y.W. 15)

'I think you're better of talking to a counsellor rather than a GP. I think you get more out of it.' (CNE)

'He'd probably give you a prescription and send you away, he wouldn't talk about it.' (CNE)

'It's as if he hasn't got time for you, then you don't feel you can talk to him.'
(CNE)

ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THE FAMILY
AFFECT THEIR ABILITY TO ASK FOR HELP.

Young people's ability to seek help is influenced by stereotypical views of the family.

'I think this image that families are sort of nice and look after each other.'
(Y.W. 15)

'Yeah, I mean that's great on the telly.' (Y.W. 15)

'The stereotype is there of like I ought to be able to talk to my mum.'
(Y.W. 15)

and with it a sense that it's disloyal to talk to anyone outside -

*'We as a family deal with this, you don't go to someone else to deal with it...
a sense of shame at not being able to deal with your family problems and
having to go to someone outside who's a stranger.'* (Youth Worker)

This stereotype is inappropriate because -

'Often the problem is compounded by the family or is part of the family, for example if there's been a

bereavement it's difficult for the whole family.' (Youth Worker)

'There are often taboo areas so that a young person does not feel free to express their feelings, for example sexual taboos might make it difficult for a young person to share feelings related to a sexual attack.'

(Youth Worker)

'When a young person's problems relate to the family, whether it be bereavement or abuse or violence or whatever somehow talking about it would be like not only them not coping but also adding to the mother's burden and they are already feeling they have to take over responsibility from them and not put more on them so that sort of closes them up.' (Youth Worker)

'It doesn't seem to work, I think I've just got to get to grips with the fact that I don't think I get on with my family that well.' (Y.W. 15)

Young people's perceptions in relation to seeking help are moulded by the attitudes, values and relationships in the family of origin.

In some families this would make it difficult.

'Cause I mean in my family everybody's very self-sufficient, it's like you do not talk to other people about stuff, you sort it out yourself. Well that's what my family did which I thought was the norm. It's how I'd been brought up anyway.' (Y.W. 17)

'I don't know, I suppose they've never actually sat me down and talked to me and told me anything about what's going on with them, what's going on with the family, you just hear it like second hand, it's never sit down and talk about this, it's find out through your friends or through other members of the family.' (CNE)

'I felt I was the outsider. You know it's a bit difficult if you are on the outside to say anything anyway to anyone on the inside so that added to it.' (Y.W. 23)

'Go away and sort it out yourself.... don't bother me. I'd be the one in the wrong straight away. I'd be a liar, a trouble maker, I'd be after attention.' (Y.W. 23)

'I couldn't talk to my parents - or at least I didn't feel I could talk to my parents at the time.' (Y.W. 17)

While in contrast -

'I think some parents would help.' (CNE)

'Like I've always been able to turn to my mum because, mm, well I haven't had a dad for, you know, all my life so there's only ever been my mum so I can really go to her and really talk to her.' (CNE)

'I'd tell my mum and dad.' (S.M.)

'I think my mum and dad would want me to talk to them.' (CNW)

'Mm, it isn't hard talking to my mum and dad.' (CNE)

There is a reluctance to add another burden -

'But I could not go to my mum because she's got her nerves and stuff.' (CNE)

'I can reach out to my mum if I want to but I don't really want to because she's got her own problem.'

(Y.P. 15)

'I don't tend to talk to my mum about things because I tend to worry she's going to take on that worry and it will add to her worry.' (Y.W. 15)

'Sometimes they come as the sick representative of the family.' (Youth Worker)

Young people's perceptions of the likely consequences of sharing a problem with their parents were:

'Maybe some parents don't understand.' (CNE)

'They might be ashamed.' (CNE)

'I'd be scared of what they'd do.' (SM)

'Sort of shout at you that sort of stuff.' (CNW)

'I got more sort of hassle.' (CNE)

'Because they go on at you all the time.' (CNE)

'Take away privileges.' (CNE)

'Ground you.' (SM)

'Say you're inadequate.' (CNE)

'Compare you to brothers and sisters and friends.' (CNE)

'They might try and put you down and speak to you like you're nothing.' (SM)

'Say "You're tired, sleep will help."' (CNE)

'And they'd probably bring it up at a later date and that.' (CNE)

'It would be with you like 24 hours a day, you know.' (CNE)

'They might kick you out.' (SM)

FRIENDS AND PEER GROUP HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TO ASK FOR COUNSELLING.

Relationships with friends may facilitate or inhibit young people in asking for help in counselling.

'If a friend gives them the right sort of response it often makes it easier to move on to talk to someone else. If they get a negative response that can close them "down"'. (Youth Worker)

'It's an easier step to talk to other young people.' (Youth Worker)

'Well they are more your age aren't they and they know you really well.'
(CNE)

'They may share with friends rather than others because they can keep more power.' (Youth Worker))

'The sharing part is helpful and has a cathartic part to it because you are not locked in with it. But there are limits depending on what the problem is. Many young people have similar blocks and taboos around them. If for example someone wants to express anxiety or fear it can be a case of trying to jolly them out of it rather than allowing things to be expressed or acknowledged. It's putting a balm over it.' (Youth Worker)

'Friends may create often unconsciously, blocks to those feelings being expressed.... they have to contain it from their friends as well because there is a limit to their ability to cope with it.' (Youth Worker)

'They don't want to know really, they are just interested in what they want to do and are not interested in things that might disrupt what they want to do.' (Y.W. 23)

"Get on with it, stop being silly." (Y.W. 17)

'Get fed-up of hearing the same things all the while.' (SM)

'Yeah, they'd get really pissed off.' (SM)

"Lets forget about it, we'll go out." (CNW)

'They may not have the knowledge, skills or ability to do what the young person needs so in some ways it could be negative stuff like "do this" or "cheer up" or "just forget about it"..... it can be quite negative stuff like encouraging them to minimise it.' (Youth Worker)

'I think you just can't talk to your friends sometimes. It's not enough.'
(Y.W. 15)

'They didn't really have the ability to do it anyway.' (Y.W. 15)

'They wouldn't have been through it and they couldn't understand what you were going through. Maybe they don't see how deep the problem is.' (Y.W. 15)

'I suppose they didn't really know what to do and everyone's got problems.... you can't dump yours on top of theirs because they've got enough.' (Y.W. 17)

'Perhaps they've got problems of their own and they don't want to hear anybody else's.' (SM)

'A lot of friends can be quite superficial and quite transitory and in a group the chances to share deeply are not that great.' (Youth Worker)

Having difficulties often leads to isolation from friends.

'I had nearly totally separated off from them.' (Y.W. 23)

'So they'd end up losing their friends.' (CNW)

Alternatively they can be very supportive.

'So you'd talk it over and discuss what's best.' (CNE)

'You'd advise them to go and see a counsellor.' (SM)

'I think you try and encourage them to get help.' (CNE)

'Yeah, it could be a relief.' (CNW)

"Oh good for you, you're actually doing something about it anyway." (CNW)

'You could help them through counselling as well couldn't you, you could go to the centre in another room.' (CNE)

'Sometimes it's the friend that actually makes the move to go and get help... who acts as a protector or shield to help a person find a way in.' (Youth Worker)

The attitudes of their peer group towards counselling is of great significance to young people.

'It would have been easier if they were all ok with it and knew what it was about.' (Y.W. 27)

'I only went to talk to them because I was told by my friends.' (Y.W. 17)

'If somebody is trying to tell you to go to a counsellor because you need help I think that's good because they are saying "I can't give you that help, go to someone who can."' (Y.W. 15)

'If one person has a good experience they will tell other people.' (Y.W. 15)

'There's a lot of word of mouth about it.' (Youth Worker)

'It depends what they say it was like, if they said it was helpful and everything, then you want to go, but if not, that's it, it puts you off.' (SM)

'If my friend tells me that she thought it was good I'd immediately take that on board.' (Y.W. 15)

'From the counsellor well they would say that, it's their job, but from other young people that's really positive.' (Y.W. 17)

'Once it was acceptable in the peer group that sort of transmitted itself.... they could take in on trust from their

peers.... this is an ok person and it's ok to accept the help that you need.'

(Youth Worker)

Some individuals have the power to stand against the views of their peers.

'I would go.' (SM)

'Yeah, if I really needed to I would.' (SM)

'They may have different opinions to you.' (SM)

'Because someone could say "Oh God they're crap" but then another person could say "Oh they're brilliant, they helped me through loads", so you don't know until you go and try it out yourself.' (SM)

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TO SEEK HELP IS MOULDED BY
PREVALENT ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN THEIR SOCIETY IN RELATION
TO HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES.**

Young people's perceptions in relation to having problems and seeking help were:

'You're weak or you're pathetic if you need help.' (Y.W. 15)

'It's no good talking about it you've just got to get on with it.'

(Youth Worker)

Otherwise you are seen as a:

'Hypochondriac or something.' (CNE)

'A bit of a bore.' (CNE)

'Somebody who goes on a bit.' (CNE)

*'You shouldn't really have problems but if you've got a problem sort it out
don't bother me with it.' (Youth Worker)*

Otherwise you become an:

'Outcast.' (CNE)

So:

'You put up and shut up don't you, half the time.' (CNE)

*'As a society we don't talk about problems and in particular we don't talk
about intimate feelings.... it's not part of our process as a society, it's
something strange, something different.' (Youth Worker)*

*'Oh yeah, my mum would go "You've got a screw loose" for going to
counselling.' (SM)*

'I think there is a belief that goes very deep that talking isn't going to resolve it.... it's not going to make it right, it's not considered powerful.'

(Youth Worker)

'It's shameful, you're not coping, you're not dealing with the difficulty....

there's a lot of stigma attached to counselling you know.' *(Youth Worker)*

Perhaps the strongest messages relate to sex differences.

'I think society in general, the culture and the environment is still one where young men are not able to share feelings, they have got to cope, be brave, play the men, button it up.... Young women suffer from the other side.... don't rock the boat, the passiveness, only saying things nice and hide their emotions, particularly non soft emotions, non feminine emotions like anger, aggression frustration and rage'. (Youth Worker)

'They're not so in touch with their feelings as what girls are I think.' *(SM)*

'I think it's harder for lads to express their feelings.' *(CNE)*

'Lads are embarrassed about talking to each other about their private life.'

(CNE)

'I think boys tend to, mm, keep their feelings inside more, more than girls, you know, boys can be really immature sometimes and you know, just laugh at them you know.' *(CNW)*

'They wouldn't really listen, childish.' (CNW)

'You'd get it back in your face, they'd just take the rip.' (CNE)

'They'd probably, mm, because of the laughter, they'd probably, you know, lads are probably laughing anyway because they haven't got a clue how to, you know, what to tell them to do more than what girls have got, like they have more knowledge.' (CNW)

'Yeah, lads feel, I think they feel they have to have an image to keep up with everybody. 'Nothing bothers me, I've got no problems or anything.' (SM)

'It's all macho isn't it.' (CNE)

'We don't get hugged as much as girls.' (CNE)

'I think they may be afraid of being too close to each other.' (CNE)

'They'd think that you're not a lad, you're not a lad.' (SM)

'Or "get out of my gang, you're not a lad, you're worrying about things."'
(SM)

"You're bent." (CNE)

'Lads have more friends that you get on it than just one who you're really close to.' (CNE)

'Men are sort of block out their fears.' (SM)

'You'd feel a bit wimpy going to another lad and saying I've got this problem, they'd probably laugh at you.' (CNE)

'I think a lad would talk to a girl who they knew quite well.' (CNE)

'It's still like it's sexist sort of place around this area with school and stuff.'
(CNE)

'Right'.

'Girls are more emotional, like you see a lot of girls sort of crying at school and all their friends comfort them, you don't see lads crying at school. They probably think you're mad or something and then they'd send you to a psychiatrist.' (CNE)

Boys get treated totally different from what girls do, because everyone thinks "Oh girls are really good, don't do nothing wrong and boys are wild and do everything wrong."' (CNE)

'I think if you need help then you're quite strong because you've got the nerve to go and ask for it.' (Y.W. 15)

I think they'd be less likely to because they're not used to it, they're probably used to that much bottling it up and keeping it inside and they're going to be thinking "Oh God I feel right silly", you know, speaking to somebody else about it.' (CNW)

In spite of these messages the sense from most young people was:

'You know, he's actually taking the initiative, he's taking it on.' (CNW)

'Mm, and he's taking no notice of his friends basically.' (CNW)

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS IN RELATION TO ASKING FOR HELP
FROM A KNOW/UNKNOWN PERSON.**

Advantages to knowing the person included:

'Knowing I was safe with them, that they wouldn't shout, that they wouldn't take it away from me.... just knowing their face, knowing you could trust them.' (Y.W. 22)

'I couldn't talk to a stranger but now I know XXX I could.' (Y.W. 16)

'It was important to me that I knew her.' (Y.W. 22)

'I'd be able to talk to, like, because I know her.' (SM)

'Yeah, and you sort of like know the person you're getting it off, then it's easier to go and relate to them.' (CNE)

'This person has been checked out.' (Youth Worker)

'.... there is checking out about not being in control, of where that information, what they are saying.'

(Youth Worker)

'Testing their trust, more than anything else whether you could trust the person to tell them things.' (CNW)

'It focused on this person is safe not the process of counselling is safe.....'

(Youth Worker)

'Young people have said to me "I don't want to talk to a stranger." and that is because of a lack of knowing the process of counselling, clear expectations, that fear of unburdening, being able to talk to someone they don't know and not knowing what's going to come back from that.' (Youth Worker)

'Worry about whether they're going to be like your parents and you're going to start telling them something and they're going to think "Oh that's stupid, what did you do that for in the first place?"' (CNW)

'No, not if you could really trust them, if you think you could really trust them I think they'd try and support you and everything, they wouldn't look down at you.' (SM)

'Young people will often come in groups as opposed to step forward and be them and me. So part of the process is they see me in other contexts in a way.'
(Youth Worker)

.... that gives them a chance to view me from a distance before making that step forward.' (Youth Worker)

'Yeah, you can only tell somebody if you've know them for so long and you've told them other secret stuff, you could tell like that couldn't you.' (SM)

'They do it because they trust us.... they have been able to establish a relationship in which they feel safe so it's almost a logical progression.... but to actually go in cold and talk to a stranger, opening yourself up and sharing your most vulnerable bits to someone you don't even know like for young people in particular is really threatening. You know it wouldn't be what they'd expect to do.' (Youth Worker)

Disadvantages to knowing the person included:

'If they knew anything about you before then it would be quite embarrassing and you wouldn't want to tell them too much intimately of what was going on or whatever.' (CNW)

'Yeah, they're always around as well, you've always like.... You might get special treatment and stuff. They'd start feeling sorry for you and stuff and feel patronised.' (CNE)

'My mum's friends with the Doctor, I don't feel I can talk to the Doctor.'
(Y.W. 15)

Disadvantages in talking to a stranger included:

'I think it's just going and talking to a stranger that's probably puts them off most because they don't know them.' (CNW)

'You wouldn't feel comfortable would you.'

'You wouldn't know them.' (SM)

Advantages of talking to a stranger included:

'Some people like to tell people their problems who aren't so close to them like....' (SM)

'I'd rather speak to a stranger.' (CNE)

'There's an advantage about somebody coming from outside who you just do not know who doesn't know anything about you.... that sort of feels safer.'
(Y.W. 15)

'.... That you're sort of bad or something, yeah, and if you saw them outside that would be really embarrassing.' (CNW)

'Yeah, I'd feel as if when I was around her again I'd be thinking, I'm wondering if she's thinking "Oh God, she's a slag," or "God, she's a stupid bitch," or whatever.' (CNE)

'I think it would be awful , but it depends.' (CNW)

'The advantages of a stranger is that you don't see them in other places.... I suppose but that's when I think about it now.... I don't really think I thought about it then, it was more important trying to find somebody.' (Y.W. 22)

'On the one hand a stranger is a bit off-putting, but actually once you've got in and checked out a stranger and it's ok that might actually be better than somebody that you knew.' (CNW)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS IN

RELATION TO WHAT WOULD HELP

THEM TO GET HELP IN COUNSELLING.

IN A COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIP THEIR REQUIREMENTS WERE:

'They just need reassurance that they're not there to go and tell everybody and that it is confidential and it won't go any further than the person you're telling.' (CNW)

'With somebody that you trust.' (CNW)

'Someone safe to talk to.' (Y.W. 15)

'That sense of somebody caring rather than it's their career.' (Y.W. 15)

'Not telling you it's bad or wrong or what have you, accepting what you are rather than telling you you shouldn't be like that and the fact that they are completely neutral.' (Y.W. 17)

Not *'Saying "You're no good."'* (SM)

Not *'Judge you on what you've done really.'* (CNW)

Not *'Yeah, somebody looking down their nose at you, I can't stand that.'*

(SM)

'I think that's the big thing as well that people can understand how you're feeling.' *(CNE)*

'You're really understood and everything.' *(SM)*

'And they know what you're feeling, yeah.' *(CNW)*

'So they'd want to feel sort of welcome.' *(SM)*

'You'd like to be close to them, you'd like to be able to get close to them.'

(CNW)

'More of a friendly one to one thing.' *(CNE)*

'You wouldn't want people to talk to you who made you feel stupid and that.'

(SM)

'Treating you like an equal.' *(SM)*

'Treating you as an adult.' *(SM)*

'So you don't want to be treated like a patient, you want to be treated like a person.' (CNE)

'A sense of being helped through a problem by almost a friend.' (Y.W. 15)

'You don't want to be told all that sort of stuff, you just want somebody there to listen.' (CNW)

'You tell somebody something and they actually take it, listen to it and then try an help you through it.'

(CNE)

'I don't want an old person that keeps going on.' (SM)

'You'd rather they'd listen and have somebody take account of what you want to do.' (CNE)

'Is just going to help you look at this is one possibility, this might happen if you do that and if you did that what do you think would happen. Just sort of let you look at it almost, and then sort of say "Well this is your life."' (CNW)

'Someone might be ready to just split, you know, like tell you exactly what happened and another person might want to take it in stages.' (SM)

The qualities they wanted in a counsellor included:

'Somebody who doesn't look all sort of authoritarian and official, someone who's kind of dressed casually.' (Y.W. 15)

'I wouldn't mind talking to an older person because they are experienced... I would probably value the advice of on older person more.' (Y.W. 15)

'Oh no, not like just left school,' (SM)

'That they know what you're on about and they know what they're doing.'
(SM)

Yeah, that they have been through problems, not like someone who's like streaked through life with no problems at all and then come along trying to tell you what to do with yours.' (SM)

'I think if people have been through the same thing as you they probably have a lot of advice to give.'
(Y.W. 17)

Confidentiality is seen as essential.

'And I mean from where I am it's the most important thing.' (Y.W. 15)

'The confidentiality thing is really important because it means that you've got the freedom to say what you

really feel or really think without having it feel that it might go further.'

(Y.W. 15)

'You put a lot of trust in them.' (CNE)

'No one else has to know.' (CNE)

'Yeah, they'd know what that means.... not telling anyone else your problems, you know, working it out between you.... You and the counsellor.' (CNE)

'I don't think I would have understood what it meant, all I know is that if I had somebody when I was young to talk to I wouldn't have wanted them to tell anybody else but I didn't really know what confidentiality was about.'

(Y.W. 22)

IN A COUNSELLING SERVICE THEIR REQUIREMENTS WERE:

They would like an appropriate venue for the service which is:

Discrete

'Underground secret hideout.' (SM)

'Yeah, somewhere where it's on the sly.' (CNE)

'No one else to know.' (SM)

'You wouldn't want anyone else around.' (CNE)

'Yeah, it would be better really, you wouldn't be at school.' (CNE)

And Accessible

*'So you can get there without asking somebody for a lift or anything like that,
because you wouldn't want
parents or your boyfriend to know.'* (CNW)

*'So you can sort of get in there by yourself at a time that suits you without
having to depend on other people.'*
(CNW)

'And it need to be somewhere near by.' (CNW)

'Pop music.' (SM)

The service needs to be:

Flexible

'That there's help when you need it.' (CNE)

'Lots of different times, sort of fit in with people's needs.' (SM)

'More sort of immediate the better really.' (CNW)

So when you -

'Build yourself up to it.' (CNW)

It's available.

Informal

'Seems important.... Not really structured and set up.' (CNE)

'Yeah, just a kind of informal kind of sit down, cup of tea type of thing.'

(Y.W. 17)

'Not going back to make huge notes on you and stuff.... if it's like records, if you're trying to get a job or something people could look at those.' (Y.W. 17)

'Nothing taped or nothing.' (CNE)

It must allow young people to keep power and choice.

'If you can pop in it's easier to take along what might feel like a big problem to me even if they only see it as a little problem.' (SM)

'You just drop in.' (CNW)

'Ask them questions.' (SM)

'Young people say to me "I just want to go along as me and sort of check it all out first.' (Youth worker)

'I knew I could get away if I wanted to.' (Y.W. 17)

'Well you wouldn't want to say much, you'd probably just like, testing the water, you know, seeing what you can say, I know you can probably say and tell them everything and a lot of people would be scared of what they want to say at first.' (CNW)

'They'd feel safe if they can check out - have some contact without pressure to return....' (Youth Worker)

'I think it's different when you go there by your own choice. It's you've actually decided to go there so you must be prepared to talk about it.'
(Y.W. 15)

'I probably wouldn't have gone into it with the right attitude I don't think.'
(Y.W. 17)

'Choices in terms of whether it's a man or a women, do you think.' (SM)

Continuity is important

'There's always like the same person.' (CNE)

'You'd feel more comfortable with the same person.' (CNE)

'Sometimes they take you on and they'll only have you for a while and then they forget all about you and jump to the next person.' (SM)

It must be free

'You haven't got the money, no.' (SM)

'How are kids that age supposed to have any money.' (SM)

For some young people a telephone service is preferable.

'It would be better on the phone because if I was seen going to a counsellor by someone at school they would take the complete rip out of you.' (CNE)

'Like your body or something then you'd probably want to be over the phone.'
(CNE)

'You'd be talking down a piece of plastic telling them what your problems are.' (CNE)

'You think you could hide from them more and they could hide from you.'
(CNE)

'They couldn't see how you were feeling.' (CM)

'I don't know, staying anonymous and stuff.' (CNE)

Some young people would feel safer working in a group.

'But if you've got a group who've got the same problems as you it's easier.'
(S.M.)

but some would not

'I don't know, I'd just, I would feel a lot more comfortable just talking to a person by myself..' (SM)

'Some of your friends would just laugh at you.' (SM)

A SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MUST INCLUDE OUTREACH WORK AND PUBLICITY.

'Right, so you think that if we sort of told young people in schools more about counselling?'

'Yeah, and what it really is.'

'How to ask for it.'

'And how they get it.'

'Where to actually go.'

'Where to find the information.' (CNW)

'I think everyone in school or something should have a few sessions, you know, with a counsellor in a group so you know like what it's all about.'
(CNE)

'I think much more publicity on it because I didn't even know it existed before I had it.' (Y.W. 17)

'You know they might need it spelled out more clearly, more.....' (Y.W. 15)

'Advertise it at school.'

'At the Doctors.' (CNE)

'What about college work posters, you know, posters.' (CNW)

'Video had young people on it which made it seem far more accessible.'

(Y.W. 17)

'Cards with phone numbers on.... have a little card, I think that would be good.' (CNE)

'A number that doesn't show up on the bill, if you don't want your mum and dad to know.' (CNE)

'Itemised bills then.... I wouldn't have phoned them.' (Y.W. 17)

'What about having somebody up at school, say one lunch time a week or something like that so you could go and make an appointment if you want to, would that be any good?'

'No I don't think that would be any good.' (CNE)

'What about if the service offered Information and Advice as well. So you could be asking for advice on careers or on travel or about counselling would that be any good?'

'Yeah, that would work.' (CNE)

Publicity needs to include the following:

A clear invitation

'Nobody ever specifically said - If you need help and you can't talk to your parents and you can't talk to school and you can't talk to your friends.'

(Y.W. 23)

'So like really simple ways of being told you can ask for help and how to ask for help and where, that's the most important thing, being told how, how to do it.' (Y.W. 23)

'We may know that from where we are.... we know we can get help, but that's not.... kids don't know that and they don't know how to get it.'

(Youth Worker)

'We need to be quite specific and to inform people deliberately this is possible, it's not something that's sort of accidental, that it is part of our job and we can actually offer counselling.' (Youth Worker)

Some information about the process of counselling.

'I think I was ignorant of what counselling was about. I had built up these pictures in my head and other people had built up pictures in their head and that's what made it like difficult and I think that's why it was nice to know I

was getting help from someone I knew, because I suppose if I had gone to a stranger it would have been in my mind that.... what are they thinking of me.'

(Y.W. 23)

'Well, mm, I suppose not but then mh, you can't really have people turning up and not know what they're letting themselves in for.' (Y.W. 17)

But perhaps not too much depth.

'So actually knowing that you would have had to explore it could have been a bit off putting.' (Y.W. 17)

'You'd have been thinking "Oh God.... that sounds like hard work."'

(Y.W. 17)

Clarity about the nature of the relationship

'It's OK for you to be yourselves and I feel comfortable with you being you.'

(Youth Worker)

'It's, I think it's important with most young people that they've got to feel important.' (Y.W. 15)

'A sense of equality in power is important.' (Youth Worker)

'But we don't give this "It's good to talk message" and "It's safe to talk" provided you are in "good hands."' (Youth Worker)

'But also alongside that clear message about what they should be requiring in a sort of safe situation, what they should be asking for.' (Youth Worker)

Clarity about the right to check out and withdraw

'It's not like completely committed.'

'Right, you can come and just explore it.'

'Yeah.'

'Try it before you buy, sort of message would be positive, yeah.' (Y.W. 17)

'If you don't really want to be here yourself then it's ok to get up and walk out....That's fine, that isn't failing, that's where you're at.' (Youth Worker)

'Not feel you've got to take what you're given, you can go along and you can try it and if it's good you know if it's good and if it's not, it's ok to say this isn't ok, can I try somebody else.' (Youth Worker)

'And until that choice is there there is a sort of danger they're just going to have to take what they're given.' (Youth Worker)

Clarity about the right to keep power and control

'I'd have wanted.... to know that I could speak to somebody and they wouldn't do anything without my say so.... that they wouldn't take it away from me, that they would just listen to me and.... yeah, that they'd let me say what would happen, not just make the decisions for me.' (Y.W. 23)

The right to return later

'Mm, so that would be an important perception to address with young people who have had difficulties in the past, that they may be new difficulties, different difficulties or the same ones coming back and it's appropriate to go back and get more help, yeah.' (Youth Worker)

and in particular that having problems don't mean you're a bad person

'And if somehow you could get in early it wouldn't be, it would be like I've been abused and that's out there and that's a problem that I'm dealing with and that's not who I am. Whereas if you leave it, it's sort of taken inside them and sort of I am a person and I have been abused and that's who I am and that seems like really fundamentally different.' (Youth Worker)

and even men need help and that's ok

'An important message sounds like that real men sort their problems out they don't run away from them.' (SM)

'And all of it needs to be done in a language that young people can hear.... can understand, you know, in a young persons' language, how they will understand it without complicated things.' (CNE)

'Yeah and I mean I think the advertisers target different groups in different ways don't they, you know.... some people can't read.' (Y.W. 15)